A Quarterly of New Literature

ACCENT

Katherine Anne Porter: *The Source*

John Crowe Ransom: *Eliot and the Metaphysicals*

Ernest Brace: *Three Men of Fifty*

Edwin G. Burrows
Conrad Aiken
Lincoln Kirstein
Paul Proehl

Jesse Stuart
Otis Ferguson
Harry Brown
Newton Arvin

30 CENTS

SPRING, 1941

Custom-edited for

teachers of undergraduates

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Half the articles are about the college teaching of literature and composition.

Half the articles are literary discussions *directly* helpful to teachers of undergraduate courses in literature—not research, not about forgotten minor writers, not trite.

Current general and professional magazines are surveyed especially for the college teacher of English.

New texts, works of scholarship and criticism, and the best of contemporary fiction and *belles lettres* are described briefly; important college-English texts are fully reviewed.

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COLLEGE ENGLISH

211 West Sixty-eighth Street Chicago

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ACCENT

A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE

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ERNEST BRACE:

Three Men of Fifty

O'Brien had been the first of the three to enter the hospital. His was a serious cardiac case and for three days he fought for breath under an oxygen tent. Mr. Handley with pneumonia was brought in the next morning. And finally, Henry Weilen relaxed limply on the third cot and gave up his long struggle to keep on working in spite of stomach ulcers. None of the three had ever even heard of either of the others, and it was many days before their proximity assumed any greater significance than the chance of a common subway ride.

O'Brien's personality was the first to emerge from its suffocating weight of physical misery. Propped high on his cot he discovered one morning that for an hour or more he had forgotten all about breathing. The cot creaked under his two hundred and fifty pounds as he turned to look at Mr. Handley.

"How ya feelin', Jack?" he asked.

Mr. Handley's frail, bony head turned very slowly. As he saw the pale blue eyes watching him, he understood, as he had feared, that he was being called "Jack." He wanted not to answer at all and to look away coldly, but he did not quite dare. There was no telling how long they might be neighbors, and even for a sick man in a hospital ward, he supposed wearily, there were social obligations.

"Comfortable, thank you," he replied and looked away.

The blue eyes hardened. O'Brien's nose, already rosy, became scarlet.

"Yeah?" he said. "Well me, I got an awful pain in the neck." He rolled over so that his back was toward Mr. Handley.

Mr. Handley turned over on his right side so that he faced away from Mr. O'Brien. And then he wished he'd remained on his back. He looked abruptly into the lustreless eyes of Henry Weilen, and he was conscious of the necessity to smile or say good-morning or offer some friendly gesture. But before he could even twitch his features into a hint of greeting, the eyes closed. Mr. Handley frowned irritably. He was mildly ashamed of himself and his timid dignity, but more than that he resented the necessity which had exposed him to being addressed as "Jack" and to seeing the hopelessness of dull eyes. He sighed and stretched out on his back.

He dozed for a while and was awakened by the pressure of a hand on his shoulder. He blinked into the annoyingly sardonic smile of Dr. Janey, senior interne. He sat up.

"Well, how goes it today?"

"I feel better."

"You'll be all right in a few days. Your temperature's normal. Let's have a look at your back."

The doctor adjusted the ear pieces of his stethoscope and listened with weary concentration while Mr. Handley breathed and reiterated a quick, nervous "one, two." He thumped the bony back a bit and with a final slap moved away from the bed.

"You can sit up fifteen minutes this afternoon," he said.

Mr. Handley watched the nurse make a note in her book.

"I'm awfully weak. I hope I won't catch more cold."

"You'll be all right if you keep wrapped up. The longer you stay in bed the weaker you'll get." He yawned and walked away, saying something to the nurse which made her laugh.

Mr. Handley settled back against the pillows. Why, he wondered, didn't the news that he was enough better to sit up make him happy? It wouldn't be long now before he'd be out of the hospital and back home. He ought to be glad. He ought to be smiling. But instead he was filled with fears and resentment and disappointment in himself.

He was not going to die, after all. And yet he was more afraid now than he had been when he had been fighting desperately for every breath. He would be able to go home again. He would climb slowly back up the stairs, cross the dim landings, smell the odors of cooking food, hear the sound of radios, of people's voices. He would sit again in the green chair by the window and look up toward the corner at the drug store and the traffic light, and stare at the black, lustrous pavement on rainy nights. And he would hear Helen moving about in the kitchen, busy with the long unnoticed but now vivid routine of getting dinner.

It wasn't, of course, until one was snatched away from such humdrum intimacies that they became important or even desirable. But now they were the dim, familiar background against which moved the ghostly shadows of his fear. The life to which he would return had become sur-

prisingly precarious. From the warm protection of his cot he could see only bleak vistas of illness, poverty, and hunger. Had he really wanted to die and get it over with?

If he had been able to afford a private room it wouldn't have been so bad. At times, even when he had been very sick, the presence of so many anonymous bodies in the same room with him had seemed even more stifling than the congestion of his lungs. And now his convalescence was making him more and more aware of the other fevered, struggling bodies. He was conscious of the fragile unimportance of his own personality. He was merely "Jack." Nothing that happened to him could have any meaning to anyone but himself. Now, for the first time, he understood how frantically he had struggled all his life to build up his little tower of dignity, and he knew too that, as with all fortifications, the reason for his tower was fear. But what specifically was he afraid of? He did not know. He could not choose from his welter of potential threats any one that seemed more menacing than the others. He feared poverty and yet, of all the people in the hospital, he had the least reason perhaps for such a fear. His civil service job was as certain to keep him fed and to end in a pension as it was never to make him rich. No, the fear was not the result of any immediate threat. It was a part of his living, like hunger. Dimly he perceived that his safe little job was the result of his apprehensions, not the reason for them. Above all else in life he needed safety and protection. That was the reason he hated the hospital ward. There was no protection, no safe retreat from the world.

At precisely two-thirty that afternoon the visiting hour began with the entrance into the ward of Mr. Handley's wife. O'Brien leaned out toward the bed on the other side and whispered, "I tell you he's got her trained, all right." He laughed.

As usual Mrs. Handley kissed her husband on the forehead, placed a newspaper and a magazine and a bag of fruit on his table, and sat down.

"Well, how are you today? You look well."

He smiled faintly. Her remark was meaningless, for she had told him he looked well when his fever was highest. He did not want to tell her he was going to sit up that afternoon. Somehow his improving health seemed to put him in the wrong, to discount all his complaints. He would tell her later, perhaps.

"I'm fairly well," he said. "But I'm terribly weak."

"What do you expect?" She patted his shoulder efficiently. "You'll be all right, if you'd only stop worrying and fretting so. They tell me you're going to sit up today."

He nodded almost guiltily.

"Well, you might look more pleased. Anybody'd think they'd told you you had to have an operation. My goodness, I can't understand you."

Mr. Handley said nothing. He felt hurt. Not even Helen seemed capable of understanding his feelings. He watched her quick, interested

eyes look along the row of beds. Nearly thirty years of living together could not quite overcome the self-conscious embarrassment of their strange situation. Here they felt they must talk and there was nothing to say. Helen was far off in a strange world. She seemed to lack all comprehension and fear of this one.

"In a way I should think it would be more interesting here where there's so much going on than if you were shut off by yourself in a little room," she said, turning back to him.

"Maybe you'd like it better. Women always seem to be interested in other people's diseases."

"Don't you ever talk to any of the other patients?"

"Not any more than I can help."

"But why? I——"

"Because I don't want to," he interrupted bitterly. "Because I hate them the way I hate people who push against me in the subway."

Her surprised glance slid away from his sharp eyes. For the remainder of the hour they found it more difficult than ever to talk.

When she had gone Mr. Handley felt unaccountably sad. The spurt of his venom seemed to have left him weak, almost nauseated. He did hate the other patients. Why should he be ashamed of that? He couldn't help it. And yet he was, though not exactly ashamed of his outburst, distrustful of his emotion and afraid of it too, as if it were the first swift symptom of some dread disease.

A little later as the nurse helped him out of bed he was more conscious of the many eyes watching him than he was of his flabbily tottering legs. But as he subsided into the protection of his chair he realized that he used to climb the four flights at home with far less exhaustion than he felt now. He drew the blanket tightly around his thin shoulders and blinked up into the sunlight streaming through the window.

"Jees, I wish I was you."

Mr. Handley looked up startled into O'Brien's sombre eyes.

"Why?" he asked.

"Sittin' up like that. You'll be gettin' out of here soon now."

"Not very soon, I'm afraid," Mr. Handley mumbled politely. "I'm still pretty weak."

"Yeah, but you get over that quick. I been here three times now. Once you're on your feet it don't take long to learn how to use 'em again. Christ knows if I'll ever use mine again. And a hell of a lot of good it'll do me anyway. You don't get cured of a heart like mine."

Mr. Handley stared out the window. He ought to express sympathy, but what was the use? In a way, he was sorry for O'Brien, but without quite knowing it he was more sorry for himself. Whoever came near you in here began immediately to unload his troubles on you. He didn't go around complaining to the others. Why couldn't they let him alone?

"Friendly bastard, ain't you?"

Mr. Handley moistened his lips nervously and looked up at O'Brien. He hadn't expected a direct attack and he couldn't think of anything to say. O'Brien's eyes were clear and immovable.

"I——I have enough troubles of my own and I try to forget about them."

"Yeah? Well, someday I hope you have a bad heart and no job and then you'll get some idea of what trouble is." O'Brien turned away.

Mr. Handley moistened his lips again. He was not angry now. A feeling of guilt stifled every other emotion. He vaguely understood that there was only one way to free himself: that was to attempt explaining his feelings to O'Brien. But there was nothing to explain. All he wanted was to be let alone. Yet in spite of all reason Mr. Handley spent most of his fifteen minutes out of bed in formulating excuses he might express to O'Brien.

He was exhausted when he got back into bed. Some other time he would say something pleasant. He was too tired now. He closed his eyes and dozed.

When he woke up he had a bewildered feeling that something had happened. He blinked and closed his eyes. Was it a vanishing dream? Or had there really been some excitement while he slept? He opened his eyes wide and raised his head. An orderly was wheeling a screen back from O'Brien's bed. The bed was moving. They were pushing it out into the aisle. A sheet covered O'Brien's head.

Mr. Handley lay perfectly still with his eyes closed. He was seeing O'Brien's puff-ball face and the radish-nose balanced on top of it. "How ya feelin', Jack?" The words seemed as permanent in Mr. Handley's thoughts as a carved epitaph. The resentment they had first roused was as dead as O'Brien himself. They had become sombre and dignified with pity.

Mr. Handley tried to squirm away from his own thoughts, but he could not avoid them. He understood now that he had a great deal in common with O'Brien. The man's living and straining and groaning and greedy breathing had become now more significant than his hard, brittle eyes or his blatant voice. It seemed to him that O'Brien would have had a great many interesting things to say, things that Mr. Handley wanted very much to know. He could not even imagine what they might be, but he could sense the stirring emotion of hearing them.

He turned over on his side, facing away from the empty bed. His back seemed physically aware of emptiness, as if the blanket were pulled away. Without seeing it at first, he stared at the high bald forehead of Henry Weilen. Gradually the face emerged into Mr. Handley's consciousness, the sunken waxy cheeks, the thin nose, the pallid taut-drawn lips. Henry Weilen was asleep. His breathing seemed to cause no perceptible movement of the covers drawn up under his bony chin. Mr. Handley stared at them breathlessly. Yes, from time to time there was a flicker of move-

ment. Breathing seemed such a precarious, difficult business; no single inhalation gave promise of a succeeding one. He turned over on his back and tried to forget the morbidity that had assailed him. His thoughts seemed to have no other function than the dredging out of great chasms of fear.

A little later he realized that he was turning his head regularly to reassure himself that Henry Weilen really was breathing. More fervently than ever he longed for seclusion. A private room would have removed him from the contagion of all this afternoon's distress. But why should he think himself more sensitive than other men? Whence came his necessity to hold himself aloof?

He did not know that he had dozed until he woke with a start. There was a screen around the next bed. He could see a doctor and a nurse behind it. He raised upon his elbow and, rubbing the sleep from his eyes, watched anxiously. He did not want Mr. Weilen to die. Henry Weilen's dying would mean something very personal to Mr. Handley. Although he knew even less about Weilen than he had about O'Brien, he had a feeling that the man's death would leave him more lonely than he had ever been in his life. And it would not be a passing loneliness; it would sink deeper and deeper into his consciousness. No one would know it was there, but he would never be able to forget it. He sighed with deep relief as he caught a glimpse of Henry Weilen's eyes. At least the man was still alive and conscious.

Mr. Handley lay back against his pillows. He glanced over at the empty bed where O'Brien had been. Poor O'Brien. He could still sense his revulsion against O'Brien's grunting, lumpy body, still imagine that it had a fetid odor, and yet the emotion epitomized by "Poor O'Brien" was pervasively sincere. He thought then of home but with no nostalgia. Home was another, an alien existence. It had nothing to do with the life here, with the business of laboring and suffering and dying. It was a refuge—safe, almost unreal. But first there was something he must accomplish here. He could not decide exactly what it was, but at least the sense of necessity was very real and clear.

They moved the screen away from Mr. Weilen's bed. The doctor and the nurse left the ward. Mr. Weilen looked pale and tired.

Mr. Handley had to clear his throat twice before he could speak. "How are you feeling?" he asked. He knew that he had quite failed to give any warmth to his question. He hoped only that Henry Weilen would not perceive the tremendous effort behind it.

The long, heavy-jowled head turned slowly. Henry Weilen looked at Mr. Handley in pallid surprise.

"Awful."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

The tired eyes surveyed Mr. Handley with mild scepticism.

"Well, at least you're in a place where they have every facility for

taking good care of you," Mr. Handley added.

"I wish they wouldn't bother. I wish they'd let me die and get it over with."

"Oh, you mustn't let yourself feel that way. You mustn't get discouraged."

"Why not?"

"Well, it doesn't pay to——"

"I know it doesn't pay. Nothing pays. If it paid to be cheerful I'd be singing and laughing twenty-four hours a day. It won't pay them to fix me up and get me out of here, either. And it won't pay the undertaker to bury me. They know how to patch you up so you can give an imitation of somebody still alive, but they can't tell you how to live. Suppose they do fix my stomach up so it can digest food again? What I want to know is what I'm going to use my stomach for when I get out of here? And nobody can tell me that."

Mr. Handley swallowed nervously. He realized that the stock conventional phrases that had got him into this unpleasant realism were not adequate to see him through it. Any bland assurance that something might turn up would be merely insulting. What *did* people do under such circumstances? What would he do himself?

"If it was just dying or being sick, I wouldn't worry. Everyone has to do that. What scares me is living."

"But you'll certainly get help somewhere. After all, they don't just let people starve."

"Don't they?"

The matter-of-fact question both annoyed and frightened Mr. Handley. "Haven't you any family or relatives?" he asked.

"No. My wife died ten years ago. We didn't have any children. I lost track of all my relatives. Anyway, they were the kind who need help, not give it. Oh, I know there are ways to get useless bodies taken care of, but you have to give up first, and that's hard."

The man sagged back wearily into silence and lay staring up at the ceiling. Mr. Handley watched the tears form in the corners of Henry Weilen's eyes and roll jerkily down his cheek. Finally Mr. Handley closed his own eyes.

The next morning he woke up with the feeling that there was something special he had to do that day. He remembered Henry Weilen and glanced over at his bed. Their eyes met and they said good-morning. Weilen seemed more cheerful than he had the day before, but somehow his smile held more tragedy than his tears. Certainly his problems could not have been solved during the night. Actually it was impossible that they could ever reach a solution. What did people like that do? What could they do? What could they do, not just with their bodies but with their thoughts and their hopes? Mr. Handley thought guiltily of his own job and its certain pension. Even with such assurance he feared the future.

He desired nothing so much as complete protection from the world. And here at last he lay in a public ward, exposed to—well, to what? What precisely was it that he feared and shrank from?

When he got up that afternoon Mr. Handley sat in the chair on the other side of his bed, next to Henry Weilen. He felt a little embarrassed when the nurse had gone and he glanced up to find Weilen looking at him curiously.

"I thought I'd sit over here," he said, "so I could talk to you, but if you're too tired, or'd rather keep quiet I can read."

"Oh, no. I almost go crazy lying here thinking. But I had the idea that you didn't like to talk."

"Well, I suppose I don't—most of the time. It's always been hard for me to talk to most people."

"I've spent my life talking to them—all sorts. I was a floor-walker. I got so I hated people, but I'd go crazy alone."

"I should think you'd like to get away from their silly questions for a while, even if it's in a hospital."

"Oh, it wasn't the questions so much. It's the way they fight and push and claw and lie to get what they want. That's one thing that makes me feel so helpless now. I know about how much you can expect from people. There are only two kinds, really—the greedy and the ones who are poor because they aren't greedy enough."

"Won't the store where you were working do something for you when you get out of here?"

Henry Weilen's face wrinkled crookedly. "The store's greedier than the people who come to buy. But don't worry about me. I'll be able to get along somehow. I didn't mean to get so excited yesterday, but I was feeling pretty low. The worst part's knowing you won't ever be able to do anything with your life again, that you've got to look around and find a place to wait till it's over."

"I know. It's terrible."

"Well, one thing, nowadays there's lots of others like me. Wherever I go I won't be alone."

"But there shouldn't be anybody in that position. It isn't right."

"Sure. It isn't right my stomach should be no good either, but there's not much anybody can do about it."

"But can't the doctors help you?"

"Not much. I waited too long and I've had attacks like this before, only this is worse."

"But if you're careful—"

"Sure, if I live on special foods and don't eat a lot of restaurant grease and things like that I might be all right for quite a while, but when you're poor or live on charity you eat what you can get, not what's good for you."

Mr. Handley stared silently out the window, feeling he ought to say

something hopeful but knowing no hope. What could there be for a man in that predicament? What would there be for himself? Peace, security. He felt his fragile body suddenly flag with fear. It was scarcely a day since O'Brien had died, and his memory held only a fast-fading tinge of emotion. As Weilen had said, it was living, not death, that was disheartening. In a few days now he would go back home, climb up the stairs, through the noises, through the smell of living. And after a few more days he would be saying to himself: What was that fellow's name? Weiley? Bailey? . . . He wouldn't be able to remember . . . I wonder what ever happened to him? And then there would be johnnycake for dinner and he would forget all about him. That was the peace of living, the peace that led one stealthily by pleasant by-paths to death. A little more money and he would have been able to guard his privacy against all this.

"Maybe I'll be able to think of some way to help you," he was saying suddenly, without having planned to speak. "I want to give you my address. I want you to let me know when you get out of the hospital. Something might turn up. I might hear about something." His ideas of what it might be were even more vague than his words.

"Listen, Mr. Handley, I wasn't asking you to—"

"I know you weren't. I probably won't be able to do anything, but I'd like to see you again, anyway."

There could be no doubt of Mr. Handley's earnestness. Henry Weilen seemed almost embarrassed by it. He stared at the slip of paper Mr. Handley gave him. "It's funny," he said at length; "I thought you were different."

They were silent and awkward for a long time, and when they began talking again it was of the weather.

Of course Mr. Handley regretted his impulsiveness, particularly since any hope he had aroused in Weilen was pure deception. What would Helen say when she heard about it? But that was not the point. Why had he made such a childish and meaningless gesture? It hadn't been just because he felt sorry for Weilen. There was some necessity in himself to accept a challenge. At least he had wrenched his attention loose from the jangling merry-go-round of his former thinking. People seemed less like hungry dogs yapping at his dignity.

He awoke the next morning with a sense of heavy responsibility. As he remembered Weilen he closed his eyes and tried to go back to sleep. A thin tremor of dread assured him that he was irrevocably awake. What a fool he had been yesterday. He shrank from the prospect of even bidding Weilen good-morning. He was both embarrassed and annoyed. Had he hoped to right the world's injustices by becoming a busybody? If he were really in a position to do anything it might be different, but he had merely added a futility to his worries. What would Helen say? There was no explanation for a thing he could not himself understand. With petulant desperation he turned to look at Weilen. The bed was empty.

A week later Mr. Handley went home. In the taxi he could almost believe for a few minutes that he was escaping from the dark cavern where he had briefly seen the gray shadows that were O'Brien and Weilen. But later, as he was climbing with slow effort to his home, up through the intimate noises and the alien smells, he knew that there was a third shadow and that it was his own. At dusk he sat in the green chair by the window and looked up toward the traffic light at the corner and the bright drugstore window. Though his chair was close to the hot radiator he shivered. He felt tired and very very lonely. He wished there were someone he could talk to, someone who was tired and afraid as he was tired and afraid. "How ya feeling, Jack?" he muttered. It didn't sound right. He tried again. "How ya feeling—"

EDWIN G. BURROWS:

*The Bull**

¡Oh blanco muro de España!
¡Oh negro toro de pena!

Lament has washed arenas with its rain
and evening sleeves are raised to catch the air.
Somewhere the toreadors are going home
with stained elaborate mantles on their shoulders;
somewhere fiesta pains the afternoon
and ears with flowers hear a pale guitar;
somewhere a dancer and a roving boy
lie folded in the gold and ardent fields.

But here lament pleads in the stillest hour:
a moon goes bumping up the charred arcades
and jackals bray. I do not want to see
the limping cricket puzzled at his echo
and night infringe with amber eyes the willow.
Deaf ears shall trace instead a clashing ring
where bellowing companies are drenched with lust
and one lone bull breathes hunger in his corner.

When creaking wheels go nagging toward the borders
and guards allow the sunset poor to pass,
when over the belly of hills tomorrow's children
crawl on their ragged hands and streams condense
their pinched abandoned prayers, the bull remains.
Oh have you seen the flank that knocks at night
or kissed the horn? His eyes are dreaded hammers
that anvil in their stalls the sword of Spain!

How many times the hissing stars remind
the edgeless headless banisters of houses
feet will not wrestle here with gravity
nor hands release the doorknobs to their latches!
Few will rebuild the thumbed utensils, few
double the moons that tagged our young decease,
or clattering through the vestibules of poems
set up the elder statues out of rain.

*Part V of a long poem entitled *Guernica*.

Across the docks of foreign states a handful
of the bewildered land like old and rival gulls,
storing against the hostile city-halls
and club-strong law their sacks of souvenirs,
unwelcome without medals, hooted to slums,
where lurk the native million alien eyes.
Shackled with mangy freedom in their cells
they hear their nimble orphans clanking home.

Sparrows at eaves indulge their city senses
and separate clocks yield twin-like grinning hours.
Tenses are two: the coming and the going.
Love answers to the price of rum and taxis.
But rhythms do not shape the rootless want
nor rifted lips employ the untongued dream.
In all the reeling ghettos west of Spain
the refugees are listening for his hooves.

His bellow will wilt the cough of planes, his roar
sting ruin from the choked and gnashing hosts
and iron will unwrap its ash, and steel
beam upwards like a pharos to the hills.
The children are lost, the leaders of the peopled trampled,
but in the empty seed-head leaps a wonder
and these immaculate walls of women groan
with loud and unpremeditated love.

Accumulated griefs are shouldered out,
the hands of sand are juggling copper tunes,
and the women smile their first and fearless smile
remembering in the wastes of Guernica,
when the wounded wept and the unhurt wept and the young
stared at the wreathing stars like ancient priests
concluding worlds beyond the outmost night,
how the lone bull calmed and curled them to his power.

Ponderously he traded for his features
thighs of the Grecian, muscle of the Goth,
till midmoon swayed with the grave delirium
and each neat girl was mastered in his image.
Today the ravished half-dead pamper their hate,
armored with all the consciousness and pride
that were his gifts, and know beneath their pulses
the armies of Andalusia pitch their camps.

Give us this day a meaning more than words,
a cause for carnage other than rightful wars,
for we have grown the crib and beat the doors,
stand elegant to the excusers with our proof.
The bull will lead the newborn into the towns,
the puppet sentries gored, the yachtsmen gutted;
beware the black bull in his metaphor
for marching dreams will challenge you with men.

HENRY TREECE:

Song for the Times

Slow saraband of pain in all the air:
Everywhere cadence, decay of a tune, of time,
Death of the gold days and the feathered joy,
And across the purple sky and the purple hills
The long undying pattern of despair.

It has come too soon, this sorrow's psalm,
And the black cloud-wrack scowling in the West,
Where brethren moving like uprooted trees
In a Birnam of blood drop aching twigs of hands,
And from leaves in an ancient way stare round about,

At callous, undulating plains of salt,
Where night-jar leers through a broken note,
And the scarecrow dog at the end of his rope
Gnaws at the door, howls as he feels as we,
The wide, immeasurable knowledge of an end.

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER:

The Source

Once a year, in early summer, after school was closed and the children were to be sent to the farm, the grandmother began to long for the country. With an air of tenderness, as if she enquired after a favorite child, she would ask questions about the crops, wonder what kind of gardens the negroes were making, how the animals were faring. She would remark now and then, "I begin to feel the need of a little change and relaxation, too," in a vague tone of reassurance, as if to say this did not mean that she intended for a moment really to relax her firm hold on family affairs. It was her favorite theory that change of occupation was one way, probably the best way, of resting. The three grandchildren would begin to feel the faint sure stirrings of departure in the house; her son, their father, would assume the air of careful patience which imperfectly masked his annoyance at the coming upsets and inconveniences to be endured at the farm. "Now Harry, now Harry!" his mother would warn him, for she was never deceived by his manner; indeed, he never meant her to be; and she would begin trying to placate him by wondering falsely if she could possibly get away, after all, with so much yet to be done where she was. She looked forward with pleasure to a breath of country air. She always imagined herself as walking at leisure in the shade of the orchards watching the peaches ripen; she spoke with longing of clipping the rosebushes, or of tying up the trellised honeysuckle with her own hands. She would pack up her summer-weight skirts, her thin black-and-white basques, and would get out a broad-brimmed, rather battered straw shepherdess hat she had woven for herself just after the War. Trying it on, turning her head critically this way and that before the mirror, she would decide that it might do nicely for the sun and she always took it along, but never wore it. She wore instead a stiffly starched white chambray bonnet, with a round crown buttoned on a narrow brim; it sat pertly on the top of her head with a fly-away look, the long strings hanging stiffly. Underneath this headdress, her pale, tightly drawn, very old face looked out with stately calm.

In the early spring, when the Indian cling peach-tree against the wall of the town house began to bloom, she would say, "I have planted five orchards in three states, and now I see only one tree in bloom." A soft, enjoyable melancholy would come over her; she would stand quite still for a moment looking at the single tree, representing all her beloved trees still blooming, flourishing, and preparing to bring forth fruit in their separate places.

Leaving Aunt Nannie, who had been nurse to her children, in charge of the town house, she set out on her journey.

If departure was a delightful adventure for the children, arriving at the farm was an event for Grandmother. Hinry came running to open the gate, his coal-black face burst into a grin, his voice flying before him: "Howdy-do, Miss Sophia Jane!" simply not noticing that the carry-all was spilling over with other members of the family. The horses jogged in, their bellies jolting and churning, and Grandmother, calling out greetings in her feast-day voice, alighted, surrounded by her people, with the same flurry of travel that marked her journeys by train; but now with an indefinable sense of homecoming, not to the house but to the black, rich soft land and the human beings living on it. Without removing her long veiled widow's bonnet, she would walk straight through the house, observing instantly that everything was out of order; pass out into the yards and gardens, silently glancing, making instant plans for changes; down the narrow path past the barns, with a glance into and around them as she went, a glance of firm and purposeful censure; and on past the canebrake to the left, the hayfields to the right, until she arrived at the row of negro huts that ran along the bois-d'arc hedge.

Stepping up with a pleasant greeting to all, which in no way promised exemption from the wrath to come, she went into their kitchens, glanced into their meal barrels, their ovens, their cupboard shelves, into every smallest crevice and corner, with Littie and Dicey and Hinry and Bumper and Keg following, trying to explain that things was just a little out of shape right now because they'd had so much outside work they hadn't just been able to straighten out the way they meant to; but they were going to get at it right away.

Indeed they were, as Grandmother well knew. Within an hour someone would have driven away in the buckboard for so much lime for whitewash, so many gallons of kerosene oil, and so much carbolic acid and insect powder. Home-made lye soap would be produced from the washhouse, and the frenzy would begin. Every mattress cover was emptied of its corn husks and boiled, every little negro on the place was set to work picking a fresh supply of husks, every hut was thickly whitewashed, bins and cupboards were scrubbed, every chair and bedstead was varnished, every filthy quilt was brought to light, boiled in a great iron wash-pot and stretched in the sun; and the uproar had all the special character of any annual occasion. The negro women were put at making a fresh supply of shirts for the men and children, cotton dresses and aprons for themselves. Whoever wished to complain now seized his opportunity. Mister Harry had clean forgot to buy shoes for Hinry, look at Hinry: Hinry had been just like that, barefooted the live-long winter. Mister Miller (a red-whiskered man who occupied a dubious situation somewhere between over-seer when Mister Harry was absent, and plain hired hand when he was present) had skimped them last winter on everything you could think

of—not enough cornmeal, not half enough bacon, not enough wood, not enough of anything. Littie had needed a little sugar for her cawfy and do you think Mister Miller would let her have it? No. Mister Miller had said nobody needed sugar in their cawfy. Hinry said Mr. Miller didn't even take sugar in his own cawfy because he was just too stingy. Boosker, the three-year-old baby, had ear-ache in January and Miz Carleton had come down and put lodnum in it and Boosker was acting like she was deef ever since. The black horse Mister Harry bought last fall had gone clean wild and jumped a barbed wire fence and tore his chest almost off and hadn't been any good from that time on.

All these grievances and dozens like them had to be adjusted suitably; then Grandmother's attention was turned to the main house, which had to be overhauled completely. The big secretaries were opened and shabby old sets of Dickens, Scott, Thackeray, Dr. Johnson's dictionary, the volumes of Pope and Milton and Dante and Shakespeare were dusted off and closed up carefully again. Curtains came down in dingy heaps and went up again stiff and sweet-smelling; rugs were heaved forth in dusty confusion and returned flat and gay with flowers once more; the kitchen was no longer dingy and desolate but a place of heavenly order where it was tempting to linger.

Next the barns and smokehouses and the potato cellar, the gardens and every tree or vine or bush must have that restoring touch upon it. For two weeks this would go on, with the grandmother a tireless, just, and efficient slave driver of every creature on the place. The children ran wild outside, but not as they did when she was not there. The hour came in each day when they were rounded up, captured, washed, dressed properly, made to eat what was set before them without giving battle, put to bed when the time came and no nonsense . . . They loved their grandmother; she was the only reality to them in a world that seemed otherwise without fixed authority or refuge, since their mother had died so early that only the eldest girl remembered her vaguely; just the same they felt that Grandmother was a tyrant, and they wished to be free of her; so they were always pleased when, on a certain day, as a sign that her visit was drawing to an end, she would go out to the pasture and call her old saddle horse, Fiddler.

He had been a fine, thorough-paced horse once, but he was now a weary, disheartened old hero, with grey whiskers on his jaw and chin, who spent his life nuzzling with pendulous lips for tender bits of grass or accepting sugar cautiously between his shaken teeth. He paid no attention to anyone but the grandmother. Every summer when she went to his field and called him, he came doddering up with almost a gleam in his filmy eyes. The two old creatures would greet each other fondly. The grandmother always treated her animal friends as if they were human beings temporarily metamorphosed, but not by this accident dispensed from those duties suitable to their condition. She would have Fiddler

brought around under her old side-saddle—her little grand-daughters rode astride and she saw no harm in it, for them—and mount with her foot in Uncle Jimbilly's curved hand. Fiddler would remember his youth and break into a stiff-legged gallop, and off she would go with her crepe bands and her old-fashioned riding skirt flying. They always returned at a walk, the grandmother sitting straight as a sword, smiling, triumphant. Dismounting at the horse-block by herself, she would stroke Fiddler on the neck before turning him over to Uncle Jimbilly, and walk away carrying her train grandly over her arm.

This yearly gallop with Fiddler was important to her; it proved her strength, her unabated energy. Any time now Fiddler might drop in his tracks, but she would not. She would say, "He's getting stiff in the knees," or "He's pretty short-winded this year," but she herself walked lightly and breathed as easily as ever, or so she chose to believe.

That same afternoon or the next day, she would take her long-promised easy stroll in the orchards with nothing to do, her grandchildren running before her and running back to her side: with nothing at all to do, her hands folded, her skirts trailing and picking up twigs, turning over little stones, sweeping a faint path behind her, her white bonnet askew over one eye, an absorbed fixed smile on her lips, her eyes missing nothing. This walk would usually end with Hinry or Jimbilly being dispatched to the orchards at once to make some trifling but indispensable improvement.

It would then come over her powerfully that she was staying on idling when there was so much to be done at home . . . There would be a last look at everything, instructions, advices, goodbyes, blessings. She would set out with that strange look of leaving forever, and arrive at the place in town with the same air of homecoming she had worn on her arrival in the country, in a gentle flurry of greetings and felicitations, as if she had been gone for half a year. At once she set to work restoring to order the place which always proved to have gone somewhat astray in her absence.

JOHN CROWE RANSOM:

*Eliot and the Metaphysicals**

The most famous and valuable of T. S. Eliot's essays, and probably at the same time the most difficult of them all, is "The Metaphysical Poets," written in 1921 in review of Grierson's new anthology of metaphysical verse. This school of poetry is either very brilliant or else very pretentious; a critical talent is heavily tried to say which, and then to say why. The critical observations which Eliot makes in this essay are quoted more than any others of his, or so at least in my own critical circles. Its public effect has been to have just about upset the old comparative valuations of the great cycles of English poetic history: reducing the nineteenth century greatly and the Restoration and eighteenth century a little less, elevating the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to supreme importance as the locus of the poetic tradition operating at its full. Yet there is difficulty in following Eliot's argument precisely; and it does not contain much real analysis of metaphysical poetry proper.

Eliot considers the usual way of defining metaphysical poetry in terms of its conceits, or metaphors, but rejects it; the historical body of this poetry is too various to admit so simple an explanation. Page 241 (of the *Selected Essays)*:

> Not only is it difficult to define metaphysical poetry, but difficult to decide what poets practice it, and in which of their verses. The poetry of Donne (to whom Marvell and Bishop King are sometimes nearer than any of the other authors) is late Elizabethan, its feeling often very close to that of Chapman. The "courtly" poetry is derivative from Jonson, who borrowed liberally from the Latin; it expires in the next century with the sentiment and witticism of Prior. There is finally the devotional verse of Herbert, Vaughan, and Crashaw (echoed long after by Christina Rossetti and Francis Thompson); Crashaw, sometimes more profound and less sectarian than the others, has a quality which returns through the Elizabethan period to the early Italians. It is difficult to find any precise use of metaphor, simile, or other conceit, which is common to all the poets and at the same time important enough as an element of style to isolate these poets as a group. Donne, and often Cowley, employ a device which is sometimes considered characteristically "metaphysical"; the elaboration (contrasted with the condensation) of a figure of speech to the farthest stage to which ingenuity can carry it. Thus Cowley develops the commonplace comparison of the world to a chessboard through long stanzas (*To Destiny*), and Donne, with more grace, in *A Valediction,* the comparison of two lovers to a pair of compasses.

*This essay is part of Mr. Ransom's book, *The New Criticism,* to be published soon by New Directions.

But generally there are complications. He cites an example from Donne of the "telescoping" of images, or the passing from one metaphor into a second which depends on it, a procedure that cannot possibly be the same as the farthest possible elaboration of the one metaphor. He quotes Johnson's unfavorable saying (based chiefly on Cleveland and Cowley) that in metaphysical poetry "the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together." But a degree of heterogeneity of material is always present in poetry (though uncommonly in prose), and Eliot can cite Johnson's own verse to this effect. And if the "violence" that Johnson objected to refers to some outrageous forcing of the sense, Eliot can say that

> in one of the finest poems of the age (a poem which could not have been written in any other age), the *Exequy* of Bishop King, the extended comparison is used with perfect success: the idea and the simile become one, in the passage in which the Bishop illustrates his impatience to see his dead wife, under the figure of a journey:
>
> Stay for me there; I will not faile
> To meet thee in that hollow Vale.
> And think not much of my delay;
> I am already on my way,
> And follow thee with all the speed
> Desire can make, or sorrows breed.
> Each minute is a short degree,
> And ev'ry houre a step towards thee.
> At night when I betake to rest,
> Next morn I rise nearer my West
> Of life, almost by eight hours sail,
> Than when sleep breath'd his drowsy gale . . .
> But heark! My Pulse, like a soft Drum
> Beats my approach, tells Thee I come;
> And slow howere my marches be,
> I shall at last sit down by Thee.

That is the only full-bodied and extended passage of metaphysical poetry that Eliot quotes. And presently he is saying that the language of the metaphysical poets is usually "simple and pure"; but that the grammatical *structure* (his italics) may be "far from simple."

Eliot then proceeds to his own thesis. Metaphysical poetry cannot be defined as some tricky habit of metaphor. It should be defined as a very various poetry of the seventeenth century which was "the direct and normal development of the precedent age." That would make it a highly inclusive poetry. But Eliot spends almost the rest of the essay on a very wide speculation as to how this class of poetry differs from later poetry, with regret that its virtue was allowed to lapse. The virtue which lapsed was not something peculiar to Donne and other metaphysical poets, but something entirely common in poets of Donne's time and even before him:

> It is certain that the dramatic verse of the later Elizabethan and early Jacobean poets expresses a degree of development of

sensibility which is not found in any of the prose, good as it often is. If we except Marlowe, a man of prodigious intelligence, these dramatists were directly or indirectly (it is at least a tenable theory) affected by Montaigne. Even if we except also Jonson and Chapman, these two were notably erudite, and were notably men who incorporated their erudition into their sensibility: their mode of feeling was directly and freshly altered by their reading and thought. In Chapman especially there is a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling, which is exactly what we find in Donne:

> in this one thing, all the discipline
> Of manners and of manhood is contained;
> A man to join himself with th' Universe
> In his main sway, and make in all things fit
> One with that All, and go on, round as it;
> Not plucking from the whole his wretched part,
> And into straits, or into nought revert,
> Wishing the complete Universe might be
> Subject to such a rag of it as he;
> But to consider great Necessity.

We compare this with some modern passage:

> No, when the fight begins within himself,
> A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
> Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—
> He's left, himself, i' the middle; the soul wakes
> And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!

I skip a passage in which the antithesis between the old and the modern is illustrated by another pairing, Lord Herbert and Tennyson, and resume:

> The difference is not a simple difference of degree between poets. It is something which had happened to the mind of England between the time of Donne or Lord Herbert of Cherbury and the time of Tennyson and Browning; it is the difference between the intellectual poet and the reflective poet. Tennyson and Browning are poets, and they think; but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose. A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility. When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.
>
> We may express the difference by the following theory: The poets of the seventeenth century, the successors of the dramatists of the sixteenth, possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience. They are simple, artificial, difficult, or fantastic, as their predecessors were; no less nor more than Dante, Guido Cavalcanti, Guinizelli, or Cino. In the seventeenth century a dissociation set in, from which we have never

> recovered; and this dissociation, as is natural, was aggravated by the influence of the two most powerful poets of the century, Milton and Dryden. Each of these men performed certain poetic functions so magnificently well that the magnitude of the effect concealed the absence of others. The language went on and in some respects improved; the best verse of Collins, Gray, Johnson, and even Goldsmith satisfies some of our fastidious demands better than that of Donne or Marvell or King. But while the language became more refined, the feeling became more crude. The feeling, the sensibility, expressed in the *Country Churchyard* (to say nothing of Tennyson and Browning) is cruder than that in the *Coy Mistress.*
>
> The second effect of the influence of Milton and Dryden followed from the first, and was therefore slow in manifestation. The sentimental age began early in the eighteenth century, and continued. The poets revolted against the ratiocinative, the descriptive; they thought and felt by fits, unbalanced; they reflected. In one or two passages of Shelley's *Triumph of Life,* in the second *Hyperion,* there are traces of a struggle towards unification of sensibility. But Keats and Shelley died, and Tennyson and Browning ruminated.

It is a brief exposition, worth far more attention than we shall have time for. With the fall of the metaphysical poets the direct line of tradition was broken; it happened rather suddenly. The metaphysical poets were the last in the old line, but the first we meet as we go back; therefore they tend to look more odd to us. Eliot argues that if the tradition had been carried on, they would not have come to look odd, and would not even have been specially designated as "metaphysical" poets. For

> they were, at best, engaged in the task of trying to find the verbal equivalent for states of mind and feeling. And this means both that they are more mature, and that they wear better, than later poets of certainly not less literary ability.

This is about the sum of Eliot's remarks. Now feeling is distinguished by the critic from thought; but Eliot seems to say that the older poets did not make this distinction, and were superior to the modern poets in being able to do without it. Modern poets think awhile, and then decide to work in some feelings; but they should be able to assimilate thinking into feeling, as once the poets did. Lamenting the modern dualism of thought and feeling, Eliot thinks he finds it bridged in the older order of English poetry, though the technique by which it was accomplished was let go and has never been re-discovered.

I confess that I know very little about that; and I must add that, having worked to the best of my ability to find the thing Eliot refers to in the seventeenth century poets, and failed, I incline to think there was nothing of the kind there. I have often tried—as what critic has not—to find some description of poetry which would regard it as a single unified experience, and exempt it from the dilemma of logic; but we must not

like some philosophers become the fools of some shining but impractical ideal of "unity" or of "fusion." The aspiration here is for some sort of fusion of two experiences which ordinarily repel one another: the abstracted exercise in hard fact and calculation; and the inclusive experience of literally everything at once. But we cannot have our theory magical and intelligible at the same time. For it would seem that from that precise moment when the race discovers that what has seemed to be an undifferentiated unity is really a complex of specialized functions, there can be no undifferentiated unity again; no return. We do not quite know how to feel a thought. The best we can do is to conduct a thought without denying all the innocent or irrelevant feelings in the process. The dualism remains. But a poem is an experience in time; and after we have had it once we can have it again, and better, by reading the poem a second time. We think through the poem at more leisure this time, and leisurely or even sprawling thinking, thinking that is in something less than entire bondage to the animal or scientific will, is the only poetic formula that I, at any rate, can find.

Such a formula indicates that we can realize the *structure,* which is the logical thought, without sacrificing the *texture,* which is the free detail—or, if anybody insists, which is the feelings that engage with the free detail. For, again, Eliot's talk is psychologistic, or affective, but we may easily translate it into objective or cognitive terms. We recall his big emotion as attaching to the main thought, and translate that simply as the logical structure of the poem; then we recall the little feelings attaching to the play of the words, and translate them as its local texture. "Sensibility," the term which Eliot has presented to the new critics, is the organ which excretes the feelings, as he would say, or the detailed perceptions, as we would say. But I think we must waive the psychological magic involved in the act of feeling our thought in honor of something much tamer and more credible: the procedure of suspending the course of the main thought while we explore the private character of the detail-items. We stop following the main thought, and take off in a different direction, as we follow the private history of an item; then we come back to the main thought.

That may be only a formula which will do for most poems. And what is different and new about a metaphysical poem? Most of the new critics still prefer to take metaphysical as describing a poetical effect which is not in Chapman and the Elizabethan dramatists unless very slightly; nor in the French Symbolists, of whom Eliot in his essay takes a notice I have not mentioned; and consists apparently in the structural device of making the whole poem, or some whole passage of it, out of the single unit metaphor. There are many such poems in Donne and other poets, and they seem distinct enough structurally from other poems. Henry King's poem is the example Eliot cites.

I should not regard Chapman's passage about the Universe as "meta-

physical"; nor deny on the other hand that it is very fine poetry and does not have to be metaphysical. It has an explicit thought-structure, even attended by an explicit moral valuation; it would not be entirely ineligible for the discourse of a modern Hegelian, like Josiah Royce. It is what we should call "reflective" or philosophical verse. But it is not without a local texture, which gets in very cunningly though without recourse to magic; it is slight and unobtrusive but positive and sharp; it is perhaps most visible in the phonetic quality contributed to the object everywhere by the excellent metric. But beyond that, it is in a few local items such as a man's *main sway,* the idea of his going on with the Universe in the *round,* the witty aside which corrects *into straits* to *into nought,* and the calling of the man a *rag* of the Universe. This is not what we think of as metaphysical poetry, and it is not for being metaphysical that we prefer it to Browning's passage, which is entirely comparable. Browning's structure consists in saying: "When a man's fight begins within himself, his soul wakes and grows." It too is explicitly stated. The principal piece of texture is in the parenthetic remark—a violent interpolation—which stops to give a sort of rough-neck picture of the man's fight within himself: it is a tugging match between God and Satan. Eliot may very well talk about the modern crudeness of Browning's "feeling," though he could talk as easily about the crudeness of Browning's imagination or perception.

And now for Bishop King's poem. The passage here is one long unitary metaphor. Its fact-structure or thought-structure is not given away (it is almost given away once, inadvertently) ; we have to infer it from the metaphor. The language is simple and logical enough; if we could remove sleep's drowsy gale and the military-voyage business about the drum, the language might be said not to have a texture. (In some of Herbert's metaphysical poems, Eliot says, the language is perfectly plain; it has no texture.) In that case we seem to have a metaphysical poem without either a visible structure or a local texture. But the structure which we require for an understanding of the poem is not hard to supply. His wife has died, and what he says to her in the poem is in lieu of something like this: "You are in Heaven, and I am eager to join you. I think of each passing minute and hour as bringing me that much nearer, and I wake each morning thinking I have traveled by eight hours nearer. Can you not hear my pulse, ticking away the moments which separate us?" (The pulse initiates a showy local metaphor within the grand metaphor, so that I feel that a corresponding metaphor might be read back into the factual original; the pulse might become the Bishop's watch, if it is not an anachronism.) But all that, however accurately we imagine we render it, has disappeared—if it ever existed—or has been "assimilated" into the image of an impatient seventeenth century explorer-traveler, following across land and sea a lady who has made an incomprehensible journey to an ocean paradise in the West; a very secular transformation.

We think normally of metaphor as developing from a detail of the

poem and making an item of local texture, centrifugal or tangential with respect to the central structure; "importing" something foreign into it, as Richards has it. But King's poem without its metaphor would have no structure, and no being. Mr. Cleanth Brooks has written about the importance of such "functional" metaphors: they are all "vehicle," to quote Richards again, with no specified tenor. (Thus, in "O, my luve is like a red, red rose," the poet's lady-love is tenor, the rose is the vehicle; but in "O, I will ask my red, red rose," no lady, no tenor, is apparent—only the vehicle, which we must translate into a tenor.) Little functional metaphors are common, I believe, as when Hamlet speaks of his "sea" of troubles. The metaphysical conceit is a variety of the functional metaphor when its central structure, and not merely a casual detail, has no explicit tenor or fact-structure but only a "vehicle" covering it. Is this sort of metaphor to be considered structure or texture? The answer would be that, to whatever degree, it must serve both purposes. It must be transparent enough to reveal its unstated tenor, and that tenor will have to be an experience rather generalized and of little distinctness, such as love, death, valediction, or conventional religious experience. But in addition to having this structural purpose, the metaphor commonly, though not necessarily, includes details which claim an energetic character of their own, which are foreign to the tenor and must therefore be called texture.

The consequence is that the tenor of a metaphysical poem is conventional and generalized and that its texture is thick and odd. The texture can easily be grotesque and raise considerations of propriety. The tenor is forced into a tight-fitting, barely feasible form; in being particularized, it is distorted. In Bishop King's poem the drum image comes out of the exuberance with which he plays the game of the traveler, but it may seem jaunty for the actual occasion, or even wrenched. Where in the old Bishop is the actual pulse-aspect which is like this Admiral Drake's drum?

The example of metaphysical poetry most commonly mentioned (by Johnson, by Eliot, by everybody) is the passage from Donne's "Valediction" about the compasses. The poet is leaving his mistress but their souls are still joined:

> If they be two, they are two so
> As stiff twin compasses are two;
> Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
> To move, but doth if the other do.
>
> And though it in the center sit,
> Yet when the other far doth roam,
> It leans, and hearkens after it,
> And grows erect as that comes home.
>
> Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
> Like the other foot, obliquely run;
> Thy firmness makes my circle just
> And makes me end where I begun.

The compasses as a mathematical instrument may be for Donne's age a symbol of great Necessity, and the activities they throw back upon the lovers' souls identified with them may be dignified, but they are awkward. He must run obliquely, in a circle, instead of going straight to his errand and dispatching it; she must lean towards him most when he is most distant, and grow erect instead of running to meet him as he returns. And after his return, what activity remains for this pair? These are strange little patterns of behavior for lovers, but the all-vehicle metaphor insists upon them, allows no others; it particularizes the lovers, and tries to endear them to us by making them slightly—in spite of the compasses—eccentric. The Restoration and the eighteenth century felt that such poetic representations were irresponsible though interesting. We today are grown again more susceptible to their brilliance as sharply-textured representations. They offer us an art which has a very formal code of composition, but in it the texture dominates the structure and all but threatens its life.

The formula of the metaphysical conceit is evidently close to that of satire: where the general behavior of the victim is so particularized, or identified with some well-known analogous behavior so exclusively, as to become ridiculous. And that fact is fair index to the peril that metaphysical poetry is in.

We must concede the sharp texture. And it gives confidence in this manner of reasoning to reflect that Donne, and such poets as use the metaphysical conceit, are gifted with a passion for the sharp texture—always, and in common figures as well as in metaphysical ones. Donne has many poems ordinary enough in their principle of structure, not in the metaphysical method, which still in the vigor of their detail differentiate him from the nineteenth century, and from Chapman too. There is, for example, "On His Mistress," the one in which he forbids his secret bride to attend him abroad in the disguise of a page. For men will spy out her womanhood:

> Men of France, changeable Camelions,
> Spittles of diseases, shops of fashions,
> Loves fuellers, and the rightest company
> Of Players, which upon the worlds stage be,
> Will quickly know thee, and no lesse, alas,
>
> Th' indifferent Italian, as we passe
> His warme land, well content to thinke thee Page,
> Will hunt thee with such lust, and hideous rage,
> As *Lots* fair guests were vext. But none of these
> Nor spungy hydroptique Dutch shall thee displease,
> If thou stay here.

Spittles, of course, are hospitals; as we might say, walking hospitals. The passage has rhetorical generalizations in it; it is almost Miltonic, but inserts the spungy hydroptique Dutch carefully as an afterthought, not as

a member of the co-ordinate series as Milton would have had it. And altogether it has sharper details than Milton fancies. The poem concludes:

> Nor let thy lookes our long hid love confesse,
> Nor praise, nor dispraise me, nor blesse nor curse
> Openly loves force, nor in bed fright thy Nurse
> With midnights startings, cry out, oh, oh
> Nurse, o my love is slaine, I saw him goe
> Oer the white Alpes alone; I saw him I,
> Assail'd, fight, taken, stabb'd, bleed, fall, and die.
> Augure me better chance, except dread *Jove*
> Thinke it enough for me to have had thy love.

The detail in the dream is not metaphorical at all; but at least it is imaginative. We say such detail is fresh, sharp, energetic, and lively or vivid; but surely one term is better than another for the critic. In ontological language we might say that Donne enforces the particularity of his object. In our present terms we say that his texture is unusually distinct; that is, it distinguishes itself more than usually from the train of the prose structure.

Eliot might contend that Donne in this last poem "feels" the thought of leaving his mistress at home, to be safe, to be discreet. That way of language is Eliot's most extravagant piece of philosophizing. But in his more usual terms he would be content to say that there is naturally a leading "emotion" attaching to the given thought, and that in developing it the poet uses language which causes the play of a great many little "feelings" also.

And now if Eliot cared to go back and analyze what happens in the King passage about the journey and the Donne passage about compasses, he would doubtless say that the poet does not openly have the emotion of his actual situation, since he does not explicitly think it, but only has it somewhere in the back of his head—since he has instead a more luxuriant emotion, which attaches to another and co-ordinate thought. But that would be an unhappy locution, and worse than mine.

JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN:

The Tyranny of Optimism

Being aware of day,
Of night's hill-burning torch
And all the sea-washed shores,
Metropolis and plain;
Having but learned to scan
Ideas and issues, and to march
A dialectic way,

With the tragedian
I understand and bow,
Since all my heroes seem
As false as pitiful:
Being one, yet multiple,
Their imaginations flew—
Made time their prized comedian.

Twisting with antic all
The grieved and crippled past,
They changed to sly politicos
Implanting emeralds where
The realer pebbles were:
Anointing some beggar priest
Bach-haunted in his hall.

All pantomimed atop
Their century's spotlit hill,
Romantic as our own
Who would transcend the slums,
Self-exiled, to become
Gay Faustus at the wheel
Outstepping all the cops.

Abnormally we dream
And all our colors are
Half-touched by death, who come
From adolescence scored,
Already, on the marksman's board;
What embryos we are
We hurry to become.

So the mind strings out its kites
Zig-zag across the plains;
Then, like a furious child,
Perverse with dreams, intent,
Mortal predicament
Comes slowly to the sense:
Touched with that zero, lights

Of intellect shine thin—
Where coffined candles ply
On emptiness, the minds
Of all of us are still
As grounded kites, until,
Across our shrapnel-printed sky,
The naive heart floats in.

CONRAD AIKEN:

The Footstep

The intermediate will have its uses: here will come
the half-light, blue, in the snowdrift's shadow, the down
of fledgling grass which shines like a green mist
on the waste earth, iridescent and sensitive,
slight beyond notice, a deception to the eye,
a delight to the hand—

or a sleight to the mind, subtle creative solstice,
that farthest point in time or place in space
when light falls rarest on the dreaming world:
here the fine needle of the first dream, touching
such painful thought as the world itself dreams only
when light is scarce.

And here the dream itself, magnificent angel
swift beyond flight of mind or hand, the shape
unshaped by hand or mind, wonderfully loosed
into the void of future, the void of past:
whirlwind of will, which takes all things to self
and bids them live.

This is the moment when the heart must wait,
pause, between times of beating, and be still—
hear its own waiting, and be still serene.
The moment when the tree, with no despair,
lets the last leaf fall from last season's loss,
yet without hope.

Come here and touch, the hand which has not grasped!
wake here and see, the eye which has not seen!
and the mind think here, which has never thought.
All shall be shaped which never yet was shaped,
in this or any world; and all shall find
intrepid way—

intricate as may be, but dreadful too—
into the unknown of the inward world,
which, as it inward works, will outward flower.
Come, it is spring, and we shall find our speech
giving itself a guise of branch or leaf
as we shall live.

GEORGE ABBE:

Penny and Fire

Copper penny shone
On flat stone,
On brick burnished by light:
Late lonely faces and the lone
Sun standing bright
On windy winter skylines,
Burnished stars
And copper hatred in the eyes of one
Tall, terrible and bare.

. . . and light, this firelight on a copper face,
Red as the sandstone seeping under walls
Where silence and cold sunlight falls,
And for long years no human face
Has known the thawing fire, nor coin has bit
The hot young hand that clutches it.

JESSE STUART:

Loadstone in My Stummick

"It ain't that funny, Mister Brewster," I said. "I know I'm tellin the truth. You can laugh all you want to laugh. If you had what I got you wouldn't be laughin."

I got up from Mister Brewster's table. I shoved my chear back. I left my plate of grub on the table. I was hungry too. I'd used a root-cuttin plow twelve hours among the new-ground stumps.

"Can't you quit laughin at Oakie, John?" Missus Brewster ast 'im.

"No, I can't," he said. "He says he's got loadstone in his stummick. I'm just wondering how he keeps his knife and fork and spoon from goin down his neck."

Mister Brewster started laughin again. He bent over until his face nearly touched his dish of leather-breeches beans. He stuck his fork in the table oil cloth. He kicked his feet on the floor. He made more racket than he made when he threshed wheat in the barn-loft with a flail. He made so much noise I couldn't answer him. I didn't see anythin funny about it. Effie Brewster didn't either. Effie was sittin beside me at the table.

When Mister Brewster straightened up in his chear he pressed his grey horns of moustache back around toward his ears again. He wiped his face with his handkerchief. He wiped tears from his eyes. He didn't look at me while he was fixin his moustache and wipin his face and tears from his eyes. Soon as he looked at me standin beside the table, he started laughin again. I started to leave the table.

"Don't you go, Oakie," Effie said. "Pa's just got his tickle-box turned over. I don't see anythin funny about it."

When Effie said this Mister Brewster straightened up in his chear again. He stopped laughin and his face lost its wrinkles.

"Mister Brewster, you can laugh all you please about a knife and fork and spoon tryin to get down my throat," I said. "I know I've got loadstone in my stummick. I ought to know it when I can feel the pin."

"How do you know it's a pin?" he ast.

"I ain't told nobody about it," I said, "but I'll tell you now. I drove the mules to yan end of the new-ground on Cat's Fork. You know where that rock cliff is at the fur end of that new-ground?"

"Yes, Oakie."

"I stopped the mules right there to let 'em wind a minute," I said. "My stummick had been feelin funny for several mornins. I thought maybe the fried apples that I'd been eatin for breakfast was crampin me. I didn't know what it was. Somethin sharp kept proddin on my inside. As I sat on the plow-beam and let my mules wind, I looked out in front

of me at the plowed ground. About six feet in front of me, I saw a straight pin come up from the ground. It made a bee-line toward my mouth. I doddled my head like a black snake does when he's atter a frog. But I couldn't miss that pin. Every way I turned my head the pin turned. And I swallowed it. I felt it go down my throat. It's inside of me and it's been stickin me ever since."

"That's a funny thing," Mister Brewster said. I could tell he could hardly keep his face straight. But Missus Brewster didn't laugh. I could see her makin faces at Mister Brewster not to laugh at me. I could tell Missus Brewster didn't like it.

"I ain't got enough loadstone in my stummick to draw a knife or a fork or a spoon," I said. "I've just got enough loadstone in my stummick to draw a straight pin 'r a shoe-brad. Now what else would it be in my stummick that would draw a pin 'r a shoe-brad?"

Mister Brewster didn't say anythin. He was laughin inside of 'im. He wanted to make Effie think I was teched in the head. He thought I was tryin to spark Effie. He thought Effie was a little sweet on me and he didn't want Effie to marry me. He wanted her to marry that Big Aaron Seagraves that lived on a-jinin farm.

"I don't know what's the matter with you, Oakie," Mister Brewster said. "But I sure do know there's somethin. I guess it *could* be loadstone in your stummick."

When he said this, I pulled my chear back to the table beside Effie. I sat down in my chear and finished my supper. Atter supper, I milked the cows and fed the hogs. When I started to throw corn over into the pigpen, I could feel that pin stickin me and I let out a few squalls when the pains hit me. I couldn't stand 'em without makin some kind of noise. I could hear Mister Brewster, over feedin the mules, laugh every time I let out a squall.

Atter I got through with the work, I went to the house. I was in a mountain of misery. 'Peared like every time I moved, that pin stuck me. I was skeared to death to get around where there was a pin. I was afraid of a pin that was on Effie's dress. I was afraid of a pin as I was a copperhead snake. "I've had whoopin cough, red measles, black measles, mumps, chickenpox, rash, and toe-each," I thought, "but I've never had anythin like loadstone in my stummick. It's the worst thing I've ever had."

I was afraid of my bed clothes, thinkin there might be a pin about them someplace. I laid and tumbled half of the night. I needed rest too, bein tired. I had worked hard all day.

At the breakfast table, I couldn't eat anythin. I couldn't stand to look at the grub on the table.

"Mister Brewster," I said, "I have to go to a doctor today. Do you mind if I ride one of the mules?"

"No, I don't mind," he said. "Do you reckon when the mule trots that pin will stick you?"

Mister Brewster turned his head so I wouldn't see his face. I could tell he was about to pop.

"Go on and laugh, Mister Brewster," I said. "Get over your laughin spell. I know what you think. You think I'm teched, don't you?"

"Not exactly," he said. "I wouldn't say that."

"That thought is in your head same as there is a pin in my stummick," I said. "There might be more than one pin there too by now. There might be a whole package of pins by this time. But I know there's anyway one in my stummick."

"Take the mule, Oakie," Effie said. "Get the big saddle. It's got a better spring in it. It will ride much easier than the little cowboy saddle."

"All right, Honey," I said.

As I walked from the house, I stopped and looked at Effie. I was holdin my hand on my stummick. Gee lordy, I never felt sicha pain in all my life. But as long as I could look at Effie, I didn't mind the pains in my stummick. I ain't sayin it because it was Effie Brewster but I believe she was the purtiest girl I ever saw in my life. Her eyes looked like wild green plums and her teeth looked white as wild plum petals in April. Her hair was the color of wheat in July just atter the wheat-dough hardens into kernels. Her sun-browned face was the color of a-turnin terbacker-leaf in September. I looked at her and I just thought how many times her Pap had told me I was teched in the head. I remembered all she'd gone through over me. I loved Effie.

"Goodbye, Honey," I said.

"Oakie, I hope you come back well and sound," Effie said. "You know what you told me."

"I'll never forget what I told you," I said. "I'll live up to my promise."

"But you'll haf to be well, Oakie," Effie said, "so you'll be able to plow for us."

"Yes, Honey," I said. "And, Honey," I said, "if anythin happens to me, there's just one man in this world I want to see you give the go-sign. If you don't, I'll come back and haunt you."

"Who is he, Oakie?"

"You know who he is."

"Big Aaron Seagraves?"

"That's the viper," I said.

I went to the barn and saddled Dick with the springy saddle and rode him out of the barn lot.

"You're brave, Oakie," Effie hollered as I left the barn lot. "You're brave to ride that fur with a pin in your stummick."

My stummick was killin me right then, but I turned and I waved to Effie as I headed Dick down the road to Vanburg. There she was, standin under the big beech tree by the sulphur spring. There was a patch of burdock behind her. She looked mighty purty standin there—her white dress and her ripenin wheat-straw colored hair and her sun-browned

face with the green burdock behind her.

It was twenty-two miles to Vanburg, and it was high noon when I got there. I rode down to Doc Crump's office. I wrapped Dick's reins around a telephone post and went into Doc's office to be examined.

"What's the matter, young man?" Doc Crump ast.

"Loadstone in my stummick, Doc," I said.

"Loadstone in your stummick?" he said. His big soft eyes rolled over under his glasses. Doc Crump was a short man. When he looked at me he had to look up to see my face.

"Yes, I got loadstone in my stummick."

"How do you know it's loadstone?"

I told 'im about the pin comin to my mouth when I was windin the mules in Mister Brewster's new-ground.

"There's not any truth to that," he said. "You must've been dreamin."

"Dreamin hell," I said. "I know when I'm tellin the truth. I was wide awake when it happened as I am now. Do you think a pin would go in at a feller's mouth if there wasn't somethin to draw it?"

"I don't see why it would," he said.

"Then it's loadstone, ain't it, Doc?"

He didn't answer me.

"Do you think I'm teched?"

"No, I wouldn't say that."

"What are you thinkin?"

"That's my business," he said. "You get up in that chear if you want me to examine you."

I got up in his chear.

"Where does the pin stick you?"

"Right below the navel."

He started bearin down on my stummick with his fist. Then he'd use his fingers and gouge.

"Lord, that hurts, Doc," I said.

"You ain't got no pin in your stummick. You just think you have."

"Doc, I know I have."

"Get out'n the chear," he said. "Nothin the matter with you."

"The hell there's not," I said. I was gettin hot under the collar.

"That'll be all," he said.

"How much do I owe you?" I ast 'im. "Better make it enough," I said, "because it's the last you'll ever get from me."

"Dollar will be enough for this examination," he said, lookin scared.

I handed him a dollar.

"Thank you," he said. I guess he thought I was goin to pop 'im.

"Don't be skeared, Doc," I said. "I ain't goin to harm a hair of your head."

So then I went on out'n there and all I know about Doc Crump is he's nothin but a quack. I didn't know what to do. I unhitched Dick's bridle

reins and climbed into the saddle and rode down the street toward the People's Bank. I felt that pin jabbin my stummick. It was a terrible pain.

Right opposite the People's Bank I seen a sign. "DOC THORNBERRY," it said. I hitched Dick to another telephone post and I walked in. There was a grocery store, a place to have your guns fixed, a barber's chear, and a boy shinin shoes, all in the same buildin. A little fellow at the front window ast me did I want any groceries.

"Nope, a doctor," I told 'im.

"Right back that way."

"Want your gun fixed?" said the feller at the gun place.

"Nope, a doctor," I said.

"Right back that way."

"Haircut?" said the next fellow. "Shave?"

"Shoe shine?" said the boy.

"Nope," I said, "a doctor."

"Right back this way," a voice said, and a big red-cheeked man stuck his head out'n a little cubby-hole clear at the back of the store.

"Are you Doc Thornberry?" I ast 'im.

"Yes, I am," he said. "What's ailin you, young man?"

"Doc, I've got loadstone in my stummick," I said. "It's drawed a pin into my stummick and the pin is about to gouge me to death."

"That loadstone in the stummick is bad stuff," he said. "There ain't but one cure for it and I've got that cure. You know it's loadstone, do you?"

"Yes, I do, Doc," I said. I told him the story about the pin comin to my mouth and I couldn't get away from it. I told him the misery it had caused me.

"You'll never do any good until you get that pin out'n your stummick, either," Doc said.

"I know it," I said. "I can't even get married until I do."

"If you're goin to get married you've come to the right place," Doc Thornberry said. "I'll fix you up. Don't you worry no more. When I get through with you you can surely get married."

"I'll be glad to get rid of my misery," I said.

"Have you seen any other doctor?" Doc Thornberry said.

"Yes, I have, Doc," I said. "I saw Doc Crump. He said I didn't have loadstone in my stummick. He thought I was teched."

"You shouldn't have fooled with him," Doc Thornberry said. "I don't have the right to talk about another doctor—but he's a quack doctor. You're not teched."

"I thought he was a quack," I said.

"Now my remedy come from China," Doc Thornberry said. "I'll tell you it's the only cure there is for loadstone in the stummick. It will draw that pin right out'n there."

Doc Thornberry took a beer bottle and broke it on the floor. He broke three more bottles and four or five glasses. Then he swept the

broken glass into a pile and poured somethin over the pile from a bottle. Stuff looked clear like water.

"Now you get down on your hands and knees, young man," he said. "Stand on your all-fours and cough hard as you can and spit into that pile of glass."

I got down on my all-fours just like Doc said. I coughed and spit and I didn't cough up a pin 'r a shoe-brad. I coughed and spit until I couldn't cough and spit anymore. Doc took a stick and stirred among the slivers of glass. He couldn't find a thing.

"It don't work," Doc said, shakin his head a little. "Worst case of loadstone I ever see. I can't draw that pin free at all." He sat there quite a while, just squattin there, lookin at the pile and shakin his head.

"I'll tell you," he said. "You've got to rest up now. In about an hour I'll work you again. I think now you better go out in the store and eat all the cheese, boloney, and crackers you can stuff in. Fill up your stummick. It'll help you."

"Just as you say, Doc," I said. "I'm followin your remedy."

So I went into the store and et all the stuff I could eat. First I et cheese that come in big yellow hunks. It was hard and full of big holes. I et two pounds of it and a box of crackers. Then I et boloney and crackers. Then I et cheese that was all runny like thick cream and it smelled somethin awful. Doc said it would help to coat the linin of my stummick. Then I et some cooked meat that come in cans, to take away the taste of the cheese. I et four boxes of crackers.

"That'll be two dollars and seventeen cents," said Zedwick Finley, the little fellow that run the grocery store.

"While you're restin," Doc said, "why don't you have the boy here, Angus, to shine your shoes?"

The boy was a hare-lip boy. He was also a poor orphan, Doc told me. He shined my old clod-hoppers until they looked like Sunday shoes. He even shined the groundhog-hide laces, and all it cost was fifty cents all told.

Pretty soon we went back in Doc's place and tried again. It didn't do any good. I coughed and spit until it hurt, but I couldn't cough up a pin 'r a shoe-brad.

"Sit down there, son," Doc said. "You must rest some more. While you're restin, tell me who that gal is you're goin to marry when we get this pin out'n your stummick."

I told him about Effie. I told him how purty she is. I don't say it because it's Effie Brewster but she's the purtiest girl in Lantern County. I told him about Big Aaron Seagraves and what I'd do if he ever made a pass at me. I showed him my gat I carry for Big Aaron Seagraves.

First Doc laughed when he saw my gat. Then he looked real serious. "Son," he said, "you don't need that gat anymore. You don't need to carry a gat—maybe shoot somebody and have to go to the pen. When I get

that pin out'n your stummick you'll be able to knock a man out with your fists. I just don't like to see you carry that gat. I'll tell you," he said, "you go out there and tell Aaron Pelvey I said to give you the best oilin and polishin job he's got. Then you can put that gat away and it won't rust. No sir, my boy," he said, "when I get that pin out'n your stummick you won't need any gat."

I went out and told Aaron Pelvey, the gunsmith, what Doc said, and he went to work on my gat. While he was workin on it the barber ast me didn't I want a haircut and a shave.

"I bet you've got a purty gal back home," he said. "Why don't you spruce up a little bit fer 'er?"

"Maybe I have and maybe I haven't," I said. I didn't want to talk about Effie Brewster to no perfect strangers. "How much does it cost?"

"That'll be one dollar," he said. "Make a new man of you."

That was kind of sassy, I thought, but I figgered up and figgered it was worth it. I had the barber to shave my face and cut my hair with electric clippers. That was my first time to shave and to have a barber to cut my hair. I looked at myself in the lookin glass atter he got through with me and I didn't know myself. I was a new man. My face was smooth and the barber even put powder on my face. I don't mean to be braggin but I was a good-lookin man.

"Come in here," Doc said, stickin his head out'n the cubby-hole. I went in.

"Say," he said, "that looks fine. Made a new man of you. Now get over this glass again and do as you've done before."

I got down on my all-fours again. I started coughin and spittin. Doc stood over me and had me to cough harder and harder. He made me cough and spit until I thought my throat was gone and that my mouth was dry as a Lantern County creek bed in July. I told him I couldn't cough anymore. He said I could. I coughed until I got so weak I thought I'd pitch down on the broken glass on my face. I got so weak I couldn't stand on my all-fours. My knees were tired. My hands were tired. My throat was raw as a turnip.

"I got to have a drink," I said.

"That's it," Doc said. "Here, drink this." He gave me some yellow stuff in a glass. I drank it. It made me sick. It made me awful sick. Then I felt just fine, but I was tired. I sat down. "We've done it," Doc said. "Look here." He was stirrin around with a stick of kindlin wood.

"The pin," I said.

"More than one pin," he said. "Look!"

"I know they're out'n my stummick," I said. "I felt 'em scratchin in my throat when I was sick. Gee lordy, I'm through with my mountain of misery."

"Look," said Doc. "No wonder you were in a mountain of misery. Look at the shoe-brads. Enough shoe-brads here to half-sole a pair of

clodhoppers. Of course you had loadstone in your stummick. But you won't have anymore. It's done been neuteralized. It's turned to *love-stone* now. You'll have love-stone in your stummick. You're a new man now. Why, son," he said, "with all them pins and shoe-brads in your stummick I don't see how you lived!"

"I don't either, Doc," I said. "I never was so sick in all my life. I nearly died. I wonder what Mister Brewster will think now. But he won't be Mr. Brewster now. He'll be Poppie Brewster now."

"I'm surely glad to help you, son," Doc said. "I was a young man once and wanted to get married. I know how it is."

I picked up to go. "How much do I owe you, Doc?" I said.

"Not a red penny, son," he said. "And if you ever get sick again, come back and see me. I'll fix you up. But you'll never be bothered anymore with loadstone in your stummick. It's turned to love-stone now."

"Thank you, Doc," I said.

"You give Big Aaron Seagraves one for me," Doc said.

"Sure will if I ever meet him," I said.

"Don't forget to get your gat," Aaron Pelvey said.

I paid Aaron Pelvey two dollars for fixin my gat so I could put it away and it wouldn't rust.

I was a new man. I felt it. I said goodbye to all the boys, and ran out to the street to get Dick. I untied him from the post and leaped into the saddle without a pain in my body. I rode toward home. I went to get Effie.

If Effie ever has any trouble with her we'll surely go to Vanburg to see Doc Thornberry.

HARRY BROWN:

Preparation for a Mystery

All of the characters in this mystery are present.
They are somewhere in the house or about the grounds,
The Colonel commenting on a fine cock pheasant,
Or praising the solemn voices of the hounds,

While his hard, Episcopalian daughters stride
Around like their brothers who were never born,
And his delicate, worldly sister poses at ease beside
A bust by Houdon which bears a peruke, once worn.

Upstairs and downstairs the servants perform their duties
As the sibilant butler listens behind closed doors.
The older housemaids speak of dead family beauties
Whose feet once moved on these carpets and these floors.

And the thin-lipped lawyer is warning the profligate ward,
As storms and darkness obscure the sullen sun,
That his hot life-span, quickly moving toward
Desire's nadir, will too soon be done.

And crouched at intervals along the marsh
Are the invalid killer, and the doctor with his knife,
And the fatal nurse, and the keeper with his harsh
Manacles and his search for the mad wife.

Toward midnight move the shadowed hands of the clock,
But none of the restless family has gone to bed.
This female hears a great key turn in a lock,
Lightning presents for that one the outline of a head.

"What do you hear?" says the Master. "Nothing," says the aunt.
"A nervous horse in the stables," says a daughter.
"I am listening, listening," says the ward. "I can't
Hear anything." Butler: "Beg pardon, a noise of water."

Then suddenly a gaunt chair moves by itself,
And the piano, with no one near it, begins to play,
And a volume of Cyril Tourneur falls from the shelf.
The second housemaid screams and faints dead away.

The enormous threats of thunder shake the stairs,
The chandeliers go dead, and by her stove
The vociferous cook takes instantly to prayers
Calling on all the saints to show her love.

Quietly from the marsh moves the murderous quartet,
The invalid with his warped feet dragging the mud,
The doctor with his scalpel and glass pipette,
And the fatal nurse with her attitude toward blood,

And behind them the keeper with his troubled face
Surveys the mass of the house, and is prepared
To engage the terrors that before him pace,
And to hold his manacles ready and unimpaired.

Too, standing beside the family crypt, a form
That is never seen, yet arrives for each disaster,
Stands as a sentinel to warn the worm
To expect some cold repast, perhaps the Master.

And the pale form beats its wings. A scream is heard
That echoes through the wood and within the Hall.
Among the dark trees flutters a black-winged bird,
Along the marsh there is no sound at all.

But the house is full of whispers. *It is time.*
Beneath the butler's body matchlight shows a stain.
From the cellars of the past the terrible stories climb
Something is scratching at the window pane.

OTIS FERGUSON:

Story-Teller's Workshop

A good story is the easiest thing to read there is, and the damnedest thing to write; and while there are many writers who can take a day off now and then and do a story, there are very few story-writers. Erskine Caldwell is one of these rare birds. He is certainly more famous for the endless *Tobacco Road* companies, and he has got known recently for his work in fitting out Margaret Bourke-White photographs with a running text. But he is still a story-writer essentially, and that is a thing essentially different from anything else.

This is not an essay on How the Short Story Is Born, Its Care and Feeding. That sort of thing is best left to those spirits doomed not to learn the first fact: that nobody in the world knows "how" to write a story. Through talent and trial and error some arrive at a state of grace where they *can* write a story or make a song or tell a joke; the rest had better let it alone, for it is not a game with rules or a carpentry with lumber and T-squares. Part of it is a gift for yarning—though this is sometimes part of the equipment of the novelist or the columnist as well. And if you *did* take one of the more classic efforts of the local liar (cracker-barrel or fo'c'sl) and write it all down, every word, you'd find (1) that in length it ran all to hell beyond space limitations, and (2) that the magic had just slipped out of it.

Anybody who can write can begin a story (how many trunks are there which were never used for traveling?); and a lot of people can keep things happening well enough, with characters, dialogue, and exciting situations or backgrounds. But the end of a good story is not just where you stop, and that is where the trunks gather around as if for feeding time. The end has to be a completion, implicit from the beginning but not anticipated; everything must have happened by then, and by then everything that has happened must be clear and just and inevitable. Anyone who has been a professional reader (*i. e.*, has been forced after every reading to sign himself as yes, no, or maybe) will know how many good things will not stand up under the retrospective light of the end page, which can be either a fine illumination over the whole or a harsh glare which reveals trickery and shallow water with artificial fireworks over it.

It is no such device as the smash curtain-line. It can be an ending in a statement of fact, or it can trail off. It is nothing in itself but the same measure of success as the completion of an inscribed circle: the compass may have swung smoothly as you followed it, and may have made some proud, ambitious arcs, but if at the end it misses its starting point or has to cheat and jiggle, then you know that something has been set

wrong or that the hand has been shaky from the start. A story must be self-contained and self-containing as nothing else in writing is outside of lyric poetry, and its end must be there from the beginning and all through —the logical completion of the writer's appointed round and his point of reference about what to put in, what discard, how deep to go and how fast. The hell of the thing is that there is no invention like the radio beam for it; however bright you are yourself, you must proceed toward it by blind navigation, and still proceed with authority and decision.

Of course there are writers who master the difficult art of the exact circle and are able to repeat time and again for large sums of money because the circle has nothing inside, because the whole thing to them is in making it come out slick and even. We needn't go into that—or be so very superior about it, either, for while they don't make literature, neither do they need to make a career of fierce appreciation for it out of their own writing incompetence. Then also there is the lucky-strike type of writer, the fellow with an experience or two so ready-made from life that a story writes itself. He will appear as, say, one out of the two hundred new geniuses turned up by Story, Inc., and O'Brien, Ltd., every year, and forgotten by the next. These people aren't quite the story-writers we are talking of.

Erskine Caldwell is a tale-teller, possessing the natural gift with the long work-out of a writer's discipline over it. I don't know how many hundred stories he has started or finished. His recent collection, *Jackpot*, contains seventy-five, many of them reprinted several times before. Many are only fair and some are duds, but name any hero in story-writing of whom you would not have to say the same. The point is that he has developed so fine a writer's eye for just the advance and the tension and the right fall of the thing for which he had a natural talent in the first place, that he can take a situation he has known and imagined, put people in it, and go on with the work as surely as the master builder of the Baltimore Clippers, without needing to tinker or wrench or worry if it will float.

Caldwell has in writing that peculiar and deceptive American drawl; he just seems to be talking and looking the other way and spitting on the hot stove, and all the time things are happening. Some of his best stories when he is in his best vein stand with those which do not resemble the writing of any other country in the world, nor are excelled anywhere— "The Spotted Horses," for example, or "Benny and the Bird Dogs." And here, as elsewhere, he is into a story before you know it—as simple as getting up in the morning. Take the first three paragraphs from one of the corkers, "Handsome Brown and the Aggravating Goats":

> "If it's not one thing your Pa's done," Ma said, looking all helpless and worn, "it's something else. I declare, sometimes I think I'll never have a minute's peace as long as I live."
>
> She walked up and down in the back yard wringing her hands, trying to think of something to do.

> The goats that Pa and our Negro houseboy, Handsome Brown, had brought home from our farm in the country were standing on top of the house chewing and looking down at us. The big billy goat had long white chin whiskers that made him look like Mr. Carter who lived across the street.

It is all there in a sudden picture, the place and the characters and the problem, not a word to spare and every word exactly fitted. And the story is ready to go.

It is the speaking voice always, but deceptive because its easy flow covers a most shrewd mixture of economy and selection, because everything is there as it should be, with no words between, showing natural and vivid.

In the main, Caldwell has worked on three levels: love, humor, and the tragic under-dog. Often he travels from one to the other in the same piece, as he did in one of the funniest and strangest books I ever read, *God's Little Acre*; often he calls in the mystic symbol to help him out (also *God's Little Acre*). But his best vein, his most assured, is the broad vein of regional humor, the whopper complete with characters and the smell of home cooking. I will stack "Handsome Brown and the Aggravating Goats" and "The Night My Old Man Came Home" up against any man's yarn, and there are a lot of others you won't read merely once: "Country Full of Swedes," "The Grass Fire" (these are New England, which he does as well and salty as the South), "Hamrick's Polar Bear," "A Small Day."

With love as with humor he is more successful when he is more robust, though there is a deal of sensitive writing in the boy-and-girl passages through his work. With tragedy, the inhumanity of man, the crushed lives of poor whites, Negroes, the floating unemployed, Caldwell is less the complete story-teller. His purpose is admirable, his sincerity is not to be questioned, his facts are straight. It is all true, and a shame on the face of the earth, that a poor or a colored man hasn't a chance against the arrogance and pitiless squeeze of men in boots. But in the stories it never quite measures up; there is the effect of violence and large passion, but there is not the actual living thing, the solid-inevitable that marks all great writing on great themes. To take three in a row: "Slow Death," "A Knife to Cut the Cornbread With," and "Daughter." In these pieces, the more brutal ones Caldwell has been more and more concerned with in recent years, the story moves and the people talk; but the thing, the miracle of life in fiction, doesn't happen. Some of it is just a little laid on—or trick; some of it is simply too brief for the long measure implied; some of it is simply put together out of an open letter of protest to the *New Masses*. But you may not think so, and you will want to have *Jackpot* contain all the stories anyway.

There ought to be some Caldwell in your library, either *Jackpot* or some smaller collection, if you have a proper appreciation of the short

story in American literature and the things from life it brings us. Caldwell is one of the good men writing, and bound someday to have a place in the courses of the professors who irk him so. They may not know a good thing when they see it because it is a new thing; but their literary history has always been a growth of new things which lay familiar on the tongue into the standard things people would not forget because of their being also true and beautiful and craftsmanwise and nice to have around.

HOWARD MOSS:

Summer Manoeuvres

Articulation is a summer thing
And through the living mouth of that July,
The street distilled with laughter thinned to death,
The hand that held, the sign that was a word
Were banners hung to meet a subtle doom.

And when the vulgar generals in their time
With all their savage gifts of slaughter came
To mar a century already scarred,
Who was to leave the bathing beach's pall
And chat with Death a moment in the hall?

Who was to leave the candy-striped umbrella,
The breathing suburbs and the pulsing park;
Or summer with its sandy wind and water?
Through all the days and evenings we could saunter
And none of us was fearful of the dark.

A madrigal of gulls above the town
Was never planes arranged with gunman's skill,
Nor we in our precisions of escape;
No choice of action but the latest gown
Where Death already hung his dangerous cape.

PAUL PROEHL:

The Night in Silence

Static made such a loud noise on her battery set that Etta couldn't understand the low monotone voice giving the closing market quotations. She twirled the dial around to some other stations, but the speaker still buzzed and crackled. She flicked the button. Just as she did so, she thought she caught the voice saying "fifty-six and three-qua—" quite clearly. She turned the radio on again, but it was still all noise; and she guessed the words must have slipped in through a break in the static. Absently she let her hand wander over the side of the radio cabinet, hunting the switch, while she wondered what month's corn the fifty-six and three-quarters was. She rocked gently back and forth, asking herself whether it really mattered if corn went up or down a fraction of a cent. She decided it did, if for no other reason than that she felt slightly uneasy and irritated at not having heard tonight's quotations. She wrinkled her eyebrows and tugged with her thumb and forefinger at a tuft of hair which grew out of a mole below her ear. She sat thinking for several minutes and then got up, her large, watery eyes fixed ahead, visualizing the grain prices as they would appear in print in tomorrow's newspaper. Walking slowly around the dining room table, letting her hand glide along its smooth surface, she came out to the kitchen and leaned lazily against the doorpost.

The first thing she noticed was how very dark it was growing. The separator bowl and the clean milk pails on the table crouched in the gloom and rang faintly when she first put her foot on the doorsill. Etta's cat came sliding out from behind the massed shadows of the cook-stove, stretching and dragging its belly along the linoleum. It pressed against Etta's bare leg; a shiver went through her and she gently prodded the cat away without looking at it. She felt strangely sleepy and at ease, standing there in the doorway. She half-closed her eyes and the room became cloudy at the edges. Everything lost its shape and became part of a pattern of blacks and greys.

Etta started. What had she been thinking of? She could hardly remember. What was it, now? Oh, yes, of course, the milking! The milking to be done. She straightened up from the door and set one foot in the kitchen to get the pails. A tremor ran along the floor and up the table legs. The pails rang faintly. Etta stopped: it sounded vaguely familiar, as though sometime, somewhere far away, she had heard it before . . .

"What am I thinking of?" she asked herself again. "What can it be that's got into me? The heat . . . and I'm tired. The dark coming on sudden."

She tried to satisfy herself with that; but she knew that wasn't it.

Somewhere between the time she had left the radio and stepped into the kitchen there were timeless moments, unexplainable, never to be recalled. She knew only that they had left a delightful warmth in her body.

Suddenly it lighted up all over outside and then darkened again. Etta ran to the door, feeling a cool breeze that was coming in through the screen. The thunder *bummmmed* dully. Etta heard a light wind blowing out of the south across the fields, making the oats bend and murmur a soft, warning *tis ah tis ah* like the sound in your ear of rubbing a velvet weed leaf across your cheek . . . a breath of wind causing brittle, shiny leaves to tremble and rustle, swaying the tall grass along the fence, unexpected and cooling and ominous. The air was almost cold on Etta's face and neck, moist as they were with sweat, but it felt good. She folded her arms across her breast, hugged her shoulders with her hands, and smiled because the heat was going and the rain was coming and the grain would grow. The oat-heads would swell and her cistern would fill. The dust would settle on the road. Her flowers would straighten and bloom. The air would feel rich and the night would be pleasant for sleeping. The rain began with a few cautious drops; then Etta watched it for a moment as it came down in streams. She ran about the house, from bedroom to bedroom to parlor to dining room to cellar, slamming the windows to, panting from her exertion and smiling all the while because it was raining. The kitchen window came down with a particularly loud bang and Etta laughed as a piece of putty came out and fell to the grass. She turned around: the pails were ringing again.

"I've forgotten the milking!" she cried. She put her hand to her throat, not knowing what to do. Then, with sudden determination she swooped the pails up and ran to the back hall, where she fumbled about in the dark for her old coat and for a long shawl to tie around her head. Opening the door, she hesitated a moment and then ran out, trying to keep on the narrow plank walk. But she lost her balance, ran into the dirt, got back on the walk, and went off again on the other side. The barn-yard was already getting muddy, but Etta splashed on across and reached the barn door, panting and flushed. She supported herself while she recovered her breath, then went in, walking where the hay was the deepest so she would sink down almost to her knees. The damp air made the hay smell fresh. She hurried to get her stool and began milking, her forehead pressed against the hard side of the cow.

Etta came back from the barn carrying two full pails, the flat muscles of her arms tight against the skin and her shoulders rounded by the load. The going was slow; several times she slipped and thought she was going to fall. But she caught herself in time, swinging a pail out to balance herself. The milk slapped against the sides of the pail and some spilled in the mud. The wetness had crept through the coat and wrapper so that when she took them off, her dress clung to her meagre, wide-spaced breasts. Etta looked down and absently plucked the dress away. She shook it to

make it stay loose. Her hand stopped and she looked down again.

"Now why did I do that?"

She laughed, picked up the separator pieces, and put them on the machine. She set her lips tightly and hummed tunelessly: she wanted to sing something, but she knew she couldn't carry a melody. And besides, there weren't many songs she knew that would fit with the warmth she felt in her body.

"I could sing a hymn. I know so many . . . did know," she thought as she poured the milk into the separator. A wide smile spread over her face. For some reason she felt very foolish. She suddenly became conscious of the trifles which made up a large part of her life. Leaning hard on the separator crank, she closed her eyes and tried to see herself walking about the kitchen just as she had been doing.

"I'd look a little queer, I guess," she told herself. "If I was somebody else and watched and heard me say all this . . . this nonsense. If I came in and didn't know a thing about *myself* and watched myself doing, well, just whatever I been doing this last half-hour, I don't know as I could make head nor tail of it. Seems so silly. Just after I got up from the radio and started for the kitchen . . ."

She opened her eyes and shook her head. "It would look sort of senseless."

The machine started slowly on a low note. As it got going—faster and faster, until the automatic bell stopped ringing and clicked instead—it whirred in a high pitch that quivered, trembled, put the air in motion, and shut out every sound except the dull undertone of the rain. The milk hurried through. The cream, thick and yellow, spattered and foamed in the enamel pan, then stopped. Etta let the crank fall out of gear, picked up the cream, and turned to carry it to the table.

"Ma'm?"

Etta clutched the pan of cream. She looked around.

"Here ma'm. By the door."

She heard a fingernail scratch idly on the screen. The muscles of her shoulders jumped. She stared at the door, trying to make out the shadow there. A young face, angular and only half-lit because the oil-lamp was to one side on the table, moved out of the dark and pressed against the screen.

She saw the face smile, strangely friendly and warm. The tenseness began to go out of her body, but her thumb knuckles still showed white where they curled over the lip of the cream pan. Etta felt the smile disarming her; but she did not want to be disarmed because she was afraid. She reproached herself, took a quick, nervous step to the table, set the cream down, and brought the lamp to the door. Quietly she slipped the door-hook in place. He didn't notice. He was young, Etta observed, and his face—what she could see of it—was streaked and smeared with rain and dust. Wet, black hair stuck out beneath his cap and hung low

on his tanned forehead. His wide, flat nose looked childish and innocent, Etta thought.

"What do you want?" she asked weakly, trying to be stern.

The stranger twisted his face into an apologetic smile.

"I got caught in the rain, ma'm."

Etta frowned. "Why did you come here?" she asked crossly. As soon as she had said it, she wished she hadn't. How should he know that she lived all alone here? Etta started: she wondered if he knew now.

"Well—there wasn't no other place along the road. I just ran to get outta the rain." He held his arms up to the light. "I got purty wet anyhow while I was runnin' and thought maybe you'd let me sleep in your barn and dry myself off."

"Oh," she said, looking down at his sleeves. She stared at them for such a long time he wondered what she meant and lowered his arms. The movement made Etta look up. "Oh—you want to sleep in my barn. Is that it? Why . . ."

A shiver of terror went through her. She was afraid of his knowing that she was alone. "Why . . . sleep in the barn . . . " She tried to think fast. "Well, now, I'll have to ask . . . " Ask whom? "I'll have to ask my . . . my brother." She almost said husband, but she was afraid that was part of a play she could not act. "He's asleep . . . upstairs. He went to bed early . . . didn't feel so good. I'll go ask him."

Etta backed away from the door, feeling beaten already because she realized that she had added a lot of unnecessary details to her lie. He must know, she told herself: he stands there so quiet. She thought she saw him grinning. Etta smiled stiffly. It was only a few steps to the stairway. She ran up, her heart pounding, her one hand pulling the skin at her throat. When she reached the top, she was so exhausted that she had to clutch at the newel post to keep from falling. She stumbled dizzily into her bedroom, holding her hand to her brow, and leaned against the chest of drawers. How did this go on from here? How long should she stay to make it look real? Should she talk so he could hear her—as though she was asking about his sleeping in the barn?

"Frank!" She tried to sound loud and peremptory. But she knew she failed, for her voice was choked and dim and far away. It was no use to try again; so she stood there, her breast rising and falling with her heavy breathing, wanting to go down and be done with this sham. But she held herself back long enough to make it look right. Then she went out, closed the door noisily, and went down. At the bottom step she hesitated, but she pushed forward and walked briskly to the door.

"My brother said it would be all right, he guesses . . . but you watch out for the stock, he says, and keep away from it."

"Oh, yes'm," the stranger said quickly. "I'll just go right up into the loft and spread out my wet clothes and sleep."

"All right," Etta said.

"Thanks, ma'm." He smiled and made a little half-bow as he backed away.

"Where you from?" Etta asked suddenly. The man stopped and took a step back.

"From Chesterton . . . near there."

"Where is that?"

"South of Peoria. About thirty-five miles."

"Oh."

"Yes'm. Well . . . "

"Why are you out on the road tonight so far . . . so far from Chesterton?"

"Oh, I'm on my way to Willis. That's about twenty miles west o' here, I guess."

He pulled off his cap and ran his fingers through his hair to get it off his forehead. Etta watched him: the action seemed so familiar, so friendly. He set his cap on again.

"I got a job there, at Willis. With Mr. Pierce."

"Oh, yes."

The stranger came closer to the screen and the gentle smile played on his face again. "You know Mr. Pierce? Lloyd Pierce?"

"I know *of* him. His old hired man works a mile south of here."

"Well, whaddya know!"

Etta wondered why she was asking and telling all this. She became aware that she did not want this stranger to leave.

"Have you eaten?" she asked hesitantly. "You must have been on the road a long while. Aren't you hungry?"

He held up a package wrapped in newspapers, grey with wet. "I'm going to eat these here sandwiches."

Etta bent down to examine the package. "Oh, but they must be soaked through. They won't taste very good."

"That don't matter."

"I haven't eaten yet," Etta said coolly. Her hand was trembling on the door-knob. "Do you want to eat something hot with me?"

The stranger smiled and Etta undid the hook. "Come in."

He stepped in. His overall trousers stuck to his legs and rustled as he walked. Etta stood aside and watched him and looked at him: he was strong and healthy and young. When he took off his cap, his hair fell over his forehead again, wet, dark, and catching the light.

"Sit down." Etta indicated a chair. She bent over the oil stove, adjusted the wicks, and struck a match. "Would you like some eggs? Eggs and bacon?"

"That'd be just fine."

Etta went about setting the frying pan on, rinsing out the coffee pot and filling it with fresh water, getting the eggs, cutting the bacon, putting plates and knives and forks and spoons on the table. She turned to him

once and saw that he was watching her move about. She felt uneasy for an instant, but it was not the same uneasiness she had felt before. She turned her face away again, and went about her work.

"This is sure nice of you," the stranger said.

He watched her prepare supper. Her movements were those of a woman who was used to work, knew how to do it, and got it done. He could see by the unevenness of her arms and the roughness of her hands that she worked hard. The tan on her face and neck showed that she was often out in the open. By the lines in her face and the transparent folds of skin at her neck, by the way her dress hung straight from the shoulders on her almost breastless, hipless figure he knew she was old—at least getting there. When she looked at him and saw him staring at her, he reddened and turned his head toward the window.

"It's almost stopped rainin'," he said.

Etta stopped in her work and went to the window with a loaf of bread and a dish of butter in her hands.

"So it has!" she said gaily, forgetting that she had wanted it to rain long and hard.

"Stopped as sudden as it started."

"Yes," Etta said. She was silent and motionless for a while. "What's your name?"

She turned and set the things down.

"Ernie. Ernie Kreuzer."

"Is your first name Ernst or Ernest?"

"Ernst. They always call me Ernie, though."

"I like that the best of the two. How old are you, Ernie?"

Ernie shifted in his chair.

"Twenty-two."

Etta set the hot platter of eggs and bacon on the table and slipped into the chair opposite Ernie. She glanced over the dishes to see if she had forgotten anything.

"Pepper and salt!" She jumped up to get the shakers. "You just help yourself, Ernie."

He took an egg and a slice of bacon.

"Oh, you've got to take more!" she exclaimed when she came back. "I fried them for you. I can't eat only one."

Ernie helped himself again and set about eating, breaking off pieces of butterbread and dipping them into the yolk. The coffee was hot and he cooled it by pouring some out on his saucer and blowing on it.

"Kreuzer. You must be German."

"My grandfolks were. My mother was Irish. I mean on my father's side they were German."

"I meant you were of German descent—your name."

"German-Irish. Kind of funny combination, ain't it?"

For some reason Etta resented that. "No. No, it isn't."

Ernie wiped up his plate with bread and brushed his hands across his mouth. "That tasted good. I'm sure much obliged."

"Did it?"

Ernie nodded and stepped to the door. "Well, I guess I'll go get these wet clothes off and get some sleep. Thanks again, ma'm."

"Oh . . . are you going already?" Etta paused, her hand at her mouth. "I thought . . . I thought maybe we could sit on the porch a while now that it's stopped raining. The night air . . . so cool."

Her voice trailed off when she saw Ernie looking rather strangely at her. She saw him hesitate, move his hands about clumsily, not knowing what to do.

"Well, if you want." He looked down at his trousers and gave them a slap. "They dried off some already. They'll be dry in no time."

"It ought to be nice out there now," Etta said apologetically. "After the rain . . ."

"The rain sure took the heat outta the air."

"We'll need chairs."

"You want I should bring these out?" Ernie asked, pointing to the two drawn up at the table.

"Yes, they'll do fine. It's too wet on the swing or the steps." Ernie took the chairs out, leaned one against the house, and sat down. Etta followed him out. She sat very straight, her head bent to one side, and her hands crossed in her lap. Neither Ernie nor Etta said anything. They listened to the patter of the last rain drops, the hollow gurgle of the rain spout, the noises of the million things that come out at night after the storm. Fireflies were in Etta's flowers, their sulphur-yellow tails tiny pin pricks in the dark. The crickets had taken up where the undertone of the rain had left off and they hummed in the field across the road.

"Did you ever squash one of those fireflies?" Etta asked.

"Oh, sure," Ernie said. "When I was a kid we used to do that. Ain't it funny the way the light don't go out? You can squash it up into a million pieces, but the light stays there. Not long, but sometimes when the pieces are big it lasts a half-a-minute."

"Just as if you had a piece of light in your hand," Etta said and was silent a moment. "A bee stung me this morning. I didn't even think about it until I thought how harmless fireflies are."

Ernie leaned his head way back, half-closed his eyes, and gently rubbed his head against the weatherboards.

"Did it sting bad?"

Etta had been waiting for him to ask and she replied quickly.

"Not very. It really doesn't hurt, but it left a swelling. Here . . . on my shoulder."

She felt beneath her dress at the neck. When she found the place she stroked and patted it. She leaned toward Ernie's chair. She knew she

was breathing quicker and was sure Ernie could feel her sharp breath on his hand.

"Here . . . on my shoulder. Feel it—here."

Ernie raised his hand slowly, as though not sure himself of what he was doing; but he did not extend it. Etta saw him hesitate, hesitated herself a moment, and then took his hand and laid it on her shoulder. Her hand trembled as it held Ernie's. She could feel the blood rushing to her head and the quivering of her whole body as Ernie let his fingers touch the swelling lightly. She opened her hand: the palm was hot and moist. Ernie pulled his hand away and it brushed over her right breast. Etta closed her eyes and clenched her fists, following the movement of Ernie's fingers down from the shoulder. It was difficult for her to breathe, and the confusion and excitement sapped her strength. She sat tense and undecided and bewildered. When Ernie's hand touched her breast, she recoiled and pressed her hand against her body.

Etta opened her eyes and saw him looking at her, his mouth half-open and his hand up in the air as though it had been hurt. When he noticed that she was watching him, he brought his arm back and turned his head, avoiding her eyes. Etta wanted to cry out, because she knew he was going. Anger with herself was taking the place of confusion in her mind—anger and bitterness; because it would not come again and because she was so weak and so old.

At another time she could have been satisfied by telling herself that she was strong-willed. But not now. She could feel tears come to her eyes.

"I think I'll be going to the barn now," Ernie said as he got up. "I've got purty far to walk tomorrow. I gotta sleep."

Etta didn't look up.

"Oh?" It was a low, sad, faraway *oh*. Ernie stepped down into the wet grass. "Much obliged for the supper, ma'm. 'Night."

His voice melted into the darkness and he slipped around the corner of the house. Etta didn't even see him go. She was too intent watching the fireflies at her flowers and wondering if she wanted to go out and catch one, crush it, and watch the pieces of light die out in her hand as she did when she was a girl. She could pretend amazement like that she had felt when she had first crushed one, seeing the drop of discolored blood come out and the bits of light throb and glow and go out.

The barn door slammed. She heard it, but she didn't know what it was. She lifted her head quickly.

"But I shouldn't want to kill a harmless little . . ."

She saw the chair was empty.

NEWTON ARVIN:

Private and Public Role

DAVID DAICHES: *Poetry and the Modern World.* University of Chicago Press.

This book, like Mr. Daiches' *The Novel and the Modern World,* aims at illuminating a certain aspect of British literature during the last fifty years by viewing it from a particular, consciously-defined vantage point. This center of reference is, in a broad sense, sociological or cultural: Mr. Daiches sees as a fundamental reality for all the arts the decay—or rather the collapse—during these years of a whole majestic structure of social relationships, and the resulting loss of authority, for ordinary men as for artists, of the ethical and personal values that gave the structure its meaning and unity. The poet he conceives as playing not only a private but a public role, and the embarrassment, the dismay, the insecurity that have followed from this shock to the essential relations between the poet and his audience he regards as the most revealing clue to the secrets of British poetry since Hardy, Housman, and Hopkins.

The fact is, of course, that Mr. Daiches is right, in his general account of things, if not always in his special commentaries on them, and since the literary question of the last generation or two cannot be seriously discussed without a mastery (however imperfect) of the cultural question, Mr. Daiches' essays on recent British poets have an interest and a relevance that cannot be gainsaid. Generally speaking, this is surely the scheme that a piece of literary history ought to follow if it is to have more than a mechanical coherence; and Mr. Daiches' accounts of the Georgian poets, of the Imagists, of the war poets, even of Eliot and Yeats and their successors are done with a feeling of responsibility, an eye to general continuities, that is wholly praiseworthy.

Why, then, does the book leave one with so strong a sense that the most interesting distinctions have not been made, that the deepest issues have not been touched, and that Mr. Daiches has omitted only one consideration, namely, poetry? Why is he so much clearer and more conclusive when he speaks of the Georgians—Blunden, Davies, de la Mare, and the others—than when he speaks of the larger figures, Hardy, Yeats, Eliot? This is a long story, but in a brief space one must speak briefly, and say that Mr. Daiches has, as two remarks in his "Epilogue" indicate, an imperfect conception of poetry itself—about which we others need certainly not rhapsodize. "This book represents," says Mr. Daiches, "a compromise between what the writer wants to discuss and what he thinks his readers will be willing to read." Critical heroics wholly aside, this does not quite describe what a tough-minded reader really wishes from a critic.

And in the succeeding sentence: "Poetry is the expression of men's mental and emotional experiences in the most direct and memorable manner." How this distinguishes between poetry and the other arts—even between poetry and the literary art of prose fiction—is not at all clear; and beyond that, the easy adjectives in Mr. Daiches' definition conjure up a legion of difficulties which (not only in the minds of logic-choppers, by any means) are too thorny—and yet too real—to be disposed of so lightly. Both on the psychological or personal side and on the side of style and language, there are thick tangles and subterranean currents in recent poetry which Mr. Daiches' method (valid as it is on its own level) is too broad and too rough-hewn to trace.

LINCOLN KIRSTEIN:

Infra Dig

New Directions 1940, edited by James Laughlin.

Twice a Year (Double Number V-VI), edited by Dorothy Norman.

It is no cinch to "review" these hefty volumes, the first of 579 pages, the second of 566. A sense of indigestion overcomes one before even starting. Somehow, fingers are reluctant to separate such bulk into pages. Hundreds of pages; a thousand pages. The ghosts of little magazines from those that died to make verse free to the *Dial, Transition,* and the *Criterion* lift up their wan heads. "Remember us," they say. They are indeed remembered.

Both of these fat testaments to the advance guard have an air of solid permanence that their predecessors never shared. But somehow the ephemeral monthly had an immediacy, an urgency which here is lost in an indication that library shelves rather than open discussion will give them immediate acceptance.

It's not that either of them is beside the point. Both proclaim social consciences. *New Directions* has a Design Section, with emphasis on Frank Lloyd Wright and an ingenious plan for the reconstruction of Bridgeport. *Twice a Year* is a review not only of literature and the arts, but also of civil liberties, with pious memorials of Louis Sullivan, Randolph Bourne, numerous pieces on Hitler and Communism, Civil Liberties in India, and Supreme Court Decisions. But the initial sense of bulk is reinforced by looking at the material. It is heavy. It is not material unavailable elsewhere. It does not give joy nor does it stimulate.

Perhaps it is too much to ask for joy today. But for some reason when Paris was the disreputable source of ideas rather than New York, the insolence, the elegance, frequently the shock of new writing, had an excitement, even an amusement, which was not obligatory, dutiful, or viscose.

Civil liberties and all, *Twice a Year* is a wreath to the Emersonian tradition. It has a nice clean simple format. It pays filial homage to Alfred Stieglitz. One is not quite sure whether he is alive or dead from the obsequious tone of the explanations and his own memories. His "Ten Stories" show us he was the same professional sour-puss thirty years ago. A horrid tone of the Messianic has always fogged his real services. This identical tone dulls *Twice a Year*. Another chief enthusiasm of the compendium is Angna Enters. In previous issues this dubious artist in various media has occupied almost as much print as civil liberties. Her present notes on Picasso and John Marin show her infantile, amateur attitude, just as surely as Katherine Anne Porter's "Notes on Writing" in *New Directions* show her beautiful professional one.

Twice a Year has its allotment of the usual Saroyan nonsense, pretentious "gusto," "humanity," "love of life,"—in essence smug and boring. There are longish pieces on or by Lorca, Kafka, Rilke. There is a big number by Henry Miller on Balzac, maybe the most interesting single critical work in either review. There is a lot of poetry which is so much roughage; fun to have written—no fun to read. The end result is fatigue.

New Directions has a thick surrealist section, very academically got up by Nicolas Calas, a categorical young Greek. You can't be sure whether he thinks surrealism is a method to practice or a dead literary movement which he is interring. Reading through the marshy pages of documents, one gets only a dismal, if clearer, picture of Dali's grand masturbatory ideal as applied to lyric prose. Freud was almost fatal to these of his followers. "Free" association led to the most arbitrary and rigid formulae. Not one of the surrealists survives as anything but a thin mannerist, an epigone of Rimbaud or Lautreamont.

Nor is the poetry here any joy. The Chainpoems, with directions on how to do more like them by Charles Henri Ford, seem as much fun as most word games. Parker Tyler has an amusing article saying *New Directions* isn't news.

On the good side there are some fine photographs by Walker Evans, a genuinely disturbing reportage by James Agee.

These two books are the channels by which avant garde writing is kept breathing during our crises. The material which gives both volumes their distinctive quality is dreary. There is less Marxism than a few years ago, and hence, in a peculiar way, less focused vitality. On the other hand, there is little Marxism in *Horizon*, Cyril Connolly's monthly now published in England, but there is also a good deal more distinction. Peter Quennell on Byron is better than Charles Olson on Dostoievsky. Rayner Heppenstall's recent story about an army physical examination is better than all the second-hand American imitations of Kafka or Joyce. The English not only seem to be better educated, they also presuppose their education, and their war sharpens their wits to a cynical ease, a desperate if perfectly polite and acute perception. We are fat here, and

not very interesting. The radical innovations are private, snobbish, without style. The English work is more superficially "conservative." But underneath it has dignity, a closeness to the moment, an awareness of a workable tradition and of the delights of art.

JOSEPHINE MILES:

Nothing for Granted

FIVE YOUNG AMERICAN POETS: Mary Barnard, John Berryman, Randall Jarrell, W. R. Moses, George Marion O'Donnell. New Directions.

These five poets belong, all of them more or less, to a tradition of modern poetry which has been called *the* tradition and which makes hard work of poetry. It stresses multiplicity and conflict of meaning in language, from the thinnest and driest to the fullest blown, and it requires strict attention even when it jests. To say, then, that these are good poets but that in a measure their book is disturbing, is to question their intention as well as to note their skilful fulfillment of it. The criticism of overpressure falls upon many of us writing today, and it is difficult to know what to do about it. The New Directions device of publishing five poets in one book complete with faces and platforms, while thoroughly sound and fair, does in this first use of it tend to put extra emphasis upon the effortfulness of modern poetic thought and procedure. It presents for example five prescriptions which fit very well the poetry they are written for:

O'Donnell seeks "to project, formalized in poetry, the total quality of a recognizably human experience," using "a dynamic method that charges the words of the poem with the maximum content of experience by controlling their interrelated denotative and connotative meanings." Jarrell makes clear the background of some of the complexities of modernity. Berryman requires for the courageous prose statement of a poem of his a very tartarous number of parentheses. Moses wants poetry to be clear and firm and does indeed fear that he makes his words bear too much weight. Most particularly, Miss Barnard says at the outset that an artist is to her a person who takes nothing for granted.

This "taking nothing for granted" idea seems to me to represent the others too, and to be close to the center of the problem. It involves not only perceptions but loads. Yet we are dealing, as we have so often recently reminded ourselves, with language; and one of language's very strongest virtues is taking things for granted. As speaking for its time, it can provide subordinations, symbols, organizations direct to poetry. It works along at a surface level which has been acquired for it by a lot of satis-

factory talk. But such a surface satisfaction the Five Poets seldom allow themselves. They speak in colloquial terms, they jingle sometimes, they write in a straight simple line, but there is always an intense atmosphere of more than meets the eye: it's a complex civilization we live in, and the word twilight fits it in 570 ways, not counting parentheses.

For what I like least in the book, then, I attempt this generalization, that it lacks the general powers which have accrued to language in our time, though it emphasizes individual word powers with virtuosity.

As for the good, all these five know what they want to do and how to do it. Miss Barnard is freest and kindest with color and full detail in such poems as "Cool Country," "The Axe," "The Orchard Spring," most traditional, granted, and at ease. Jarrell and Berryman employ those "absolute butlers in the spacious hall" which one has evidently got to face for a while in poetry, but they do them a lot more justice than one usually sees done. In poems like Berryman's "The Disciple" and Jarrell's "Poem for Someone Killed in Spain," for example, where there is a strong focus for the abstractions, for the *the's*, they are effective and memorable. The detail at worst pegs out the mood as on a cribbage board, and at best gathers into one force as it works.

Moses inhabits a less Kafkan world of abstracts and takes his sights straighter; if making comment, he makes it best in connection with live natural detail, as in the fine "Wind in the Night," "Scenery of Anger," "More Things in Heaven." O'Donnell pushes much too hard much of the time, but doesn't have to. He knows how to let the words move and so, I think, mean the more, as in "The Hound" and "One Mode" and especially "Season of Dying."

Such judgment rests on a basis of valuation different in at least one respect from the theories of the Five, as it includes very strongly the coinciding of poem stress and current speech stress. It praises, probably, the very poems which they consider not central to their purposes and achievements. It asks of them, probably, just what they would want not to do: go easier.

OTHER RECENT BOOKS:

ALBERT HALPER: *Sons of the Fathers.* Harpers.
PAUL COREY: *The Road Returns.* Bobbs Merrill.
DAVID CORNEL DEJONG: *Light Sons and Dark.* Harpers.

Read one after another, these three novels of middlewestern farm life in the present century bring on the dismal feeling, in at least one reader, that here is genuine irresponsibility—not the sort that worries Mr. MacLeish so much these days—but the irresponsibility that blandly produces unbeautiful and frequently unreadable prose. Scarcely a sentence in any of these books is really "written." The late Scott Fitzgerald, who wrote one good book, once remarked, "How anyone could take up the responsibility of being a novelist without a sharp and concise attitude about life is a puzzle to me." And how much more puzzling are some of our so-called novelists whose works read like first drafts turned out under the heaviest pressure, innocent of grace or wit or form.

Mr. Corey's *The Road Returns* is, if I must split hairs, the best of these three books. It represents a compromise between the collective novel and the family chronicle of farm life, and is a rather pedestrian account of agrarian Iowa from 1917 to 1923. On the first page the farm land is "quickening in the April sun," and we are introduced to the Mantz family—at least I was introduced to them, not having read Mr. Corey's first novel, *Three Miles Square,* which detailed their pre-first-World-War adventures. They and their neighbors are carried through seven years of war, influenza, birth, death, good times and bad, mostly bad. The book bristles with cliches: "pent-up resentment," "her heart warmed," "last year was still bitter in her memory," "crestfallen look," "bitter sigh," "with trembling fingers," etc. Mr. Louis Bromfield, in a fine rush to go out of his way to find a simile, has said that Mr. Corey's book is "like a painting of Pieter Breughel," a statement devised to frighten old men from the chimney seat, no doubt. But the novel is not much better, not much worse than the run of farm novels. (Bobbs Merrill have given it one of the ugliest formats in many a day, with an unsightly painting on the dust jacket and with a cover that resembles those volumes on Sane Sex Living by Dr. Long.)

Mr. DeJong, who has done far better things than what we have here, offers the farm family with much vague gloom, sentimentality, incongruous D. H. Lawrence touches, and dialogue of the sort that was so fulsomely admired in *Of Mice and Men.* There are two brothers, Ben and Joe, whom the author admires and evidently expects us to admire, steeped in the futility of an almost worthless farm. There are also an unadmirable father, a suffering mother, a grandfather who likes to steal the egg money (he dies), and the "dark sons," Bruce, Marius, and Sutton. Sutton does quite well in the illegal liquor game up to the time he is captured and put away. The lens that Mr. DeJong turns on these people is out of focus a good deal of the while, although I did enjoy a short section dealing with two of the brothers in Kansas City. On the other hand, you might not.

One does not think of Albert Halper as a particularly graceful writer, but certain enjoyable scenes in *Union Square,* and some of the stories in *On the Shore* seem masterly indeed compared with *Sons of the Fathers.* Here Mr. Halper always has his hand firmly on the most readily available stereotype, the awkward phrase, the unconvincing and hurried explanation. It is the story of Saul Bergman, a Jewish grocer who has left Russia for Chicago to escape service in the Czar's army. Saul goes from one grocery store to another in a series of failures, his family grows up, and militarism—this time the American variety—catches up with him again during the Wilsonian crusade. One of his sons attempts to elude the draft by homesteading; another is killed in France; and Saul Bergman's life is really over. The book is a plea for isolationism; and it is unfortunate, but only, I think, for Mr. Halper, that it is also a poor novel. The beating of drums by a new group of crusaders will limit its audience; but no more than the faults of the book itself.

Weldon Kees

HALFORD E. LUCCOCK: *American Mirror.* The Macmillan Co.
PERCY H. BOYNTON: *America in Contemporary Fiction.* University of Chicago Press.

Professor Luccock, in dealing with the "social, ethical and religious aspects" of American literature during the 1930's, admits that it is too early to sum up the decade or even see it clearly, but he wants to assemble some data that will help in understanding it more fully. The result is a superficial, loosely arranged collection of catchwords, excerpts from books, and notations of trends. Perhaps the reviewer should have felt flattered to find a specimen of his critical prose lifted bodily into the text without benefit of quotes—after all, it's less serious than having a poem or a story appropriated, and it means that someone believes you once said the right thing about a certain book. But it makes you suspect the method, or rather it reinforces your suspicions engendered during reading in earlier pages of the book. Even though Professor Luccock appears to be a man of good will, with fairly liberal sympathies and genial judgments, *American Mirror* is just another unimportant contribution to the cafeteria school of criticism.

Between the beginning chapter ("Changing Values") that traces some of the main currents of American thought from Colonial to very recent times, and the refreshing last chapter ("Knowledge and Wisdom") about the relationship of the arts and sciences in "academia," Professor Boynton's *America in Contemporary Fiction* is merely a series of essays on individual writers—neither new nor memorably expressed. Six of the authors discussed (Dreiser, Cabell, Cather, Hergesheimer, Anderson, Lewis) are brought up to date from studies in previous Boynton books. The author must be commended for not falling into the usual overpraise of Willa Cather, but one must pause to ask how anyone attempting to write a serious book of criticism at this time can include chapters on Cabell and Hergesheimer. Even considered purely as social influences, they could be adequately explained in much less space. The same might be said for Mary Ellen Chase and Dorothy Canfield Fisher, who share a chapter here. Professor Boynton makes out a reasonable case against Dos Passos along aesthetic lines, then spoils it

with moral judgments: Dos Passos writes too much about drunks, etc. Although Hemingway's work lies mostly outside the geographical limits of the United States, he certainly carries with him more of America than those who have stayed at home; yet this book doesn't even mention him as an influence. Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle* is underpraised, though the ineptitudes of his early *Cup of Gold* are not noticed: "It is a good tale, vividly told," and so on. Boynton gives synopses of *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Of Mice and Men,* but passes no critical judgment on them despite the urgent need for it.

It is unfortunate for these two books that they were published at a time when they must inevitably be subjected to comparison with Edmund Wilson's three recent articles in the *New Republic,* examining only a handful of present-day novelists, but brilliantly and deeply—furnishing more essential information about literature today than does either Luccock or Boynton. Then there is Fred B. Millett's more general volume, *Contemporary American Authors,* containing all the important factual material (biographies, bibliographies, critical references) on the subject, together with brief judicious essays on both trends and authors. For the present, Wilson supplies the best compass to be found, and Millett the best maps.

Harry Thornton Moore

JOHN D. GORDAN: *Joseph Conrad; The Making of a Novelist.* Harvard University Press.

JOHN A. GEE AND PAUL J. STURM: *Letters of Joseph Conrad to Marguerite Poradowska, 1890-1920.* Yale University Press.

Mr. Gordan's study of the early novels and stories of Conrad, from *Almayer's Folly* through *Lord Jim,* is a remarkably thorough work, done with that determination to overlook nothing, to search every source of information and use every scrap of evidence, which characterizes the most conscientious American scholarship. The result is a compendium of factual data about Conrad's struggles with his demon which every student of the novelist must keep at hand. Mr. Gordan, in his passion for completeness, has not only examined all that has been written about his hero, and all the surviving states of text—manuscript, typescript, proof, serial edition, book edition, revised edition—, but even journeyed to Borneo and Java to gather information about the originals of *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands.* This attempt to rediscover the history of the early novels consists of three major enterprises: tracing the genesis of plots and characters back to the four sources Conrad used (personal experience, the experience of others, things heard about, and things read), study of the growth of text by comparing all extant versions, and an exhaustive effort to find out when (if possible to the exact days) stories were begun, interrupted, resumed, and ended, a task made confusing by Conrad's inaccurate recollections of these dates. The book ends with a survey of Conrad's reception by critics and public.

Necessarily much attention is given throughout to the heart of the mystery, Conrad's mind and moods. And the impression that dominates is one of agony in creation, an agony due partly to the physical suffering of ill health, partly to unceasing financial worries, but mostly to nerves. His demon plagued him constantly with fits of creative impotence.

> There is 12 pages written and I sit before them every morning, day after day, for the last 2 months and cannot add a sentence, add a word! I am paralyzed by doubt and have just sense enough left to feel the agony but am powerless to invent a way out of it.

This is written of *The Rescue,* which gave him more trouble than any other novel (in fact, took him twenty-three years to finish), but the complaint reechoes through the years and the letters. The wonder is that he finished as much work as he did. To tell the truth, the more letters one reads the more one suspects that the paralysis is exaggerated, for Conrad was inclined to make the most of his difficulties. But even at a discount those difficulties were enormous. There was also the difficulty of finding the right expression for thoughts which, themselves, were often born in agony. As late as 1907 he could say, "English is still a foreign language to me, requiring an immense effort to handle." He was always rewriting. Mr. Gordan provides abundant examples of sentences and paragraphs in the various stages of formation. These, however, seldom reflect the struggles of a man with a foreign language. They do tell us how desperately this artist—for Conrad was first and foremost an artist—labored (not always successfully) to make every phrase the perfect vessel of his meaning. The spectacle of these Herculean wrestlings with language is extraordinarily interesting. A more acute critic than Mr. Gordan could doubtless find in them the key to Conrad's genius, with its weaknesses as well as its greatnesses. But no one can ever tell why, by what process of assimilation, the young Polish adventurer who thought it would be amusing to write a novel was from the very first a master of intricate English.

In February of 1890, at the deathbed of a distant cousin, Conrad met this cousin's French-Belgian wife. Born Marguerite Gachet, she had married Alexandre Poradowski, an exiled

Polish patriot. Between the young sailor and his French "aunt," as he liked to call her, sprang immediately an enduring friendship. She was a beautiful woman with a beautiful character; it is probable that Conrad fell in love with her. But they seldom had opportunity for meeting, and whatever she may have meant for him at first, she soon became the sympathetic friend, the confidante of his aspirations, his experiences, his sufferings, and his earliest struggles with writing. Inasmuch as she was a novelist of some reputation, he naturally turned to her amid the perplexities of *Almayer's Folly*. She was for him in these first writing years what Edward Garnett became a little later.

His letters to her that have been preserved cover mainly the years from 1890 to 1895; there is, besides, a scattering of letters from 1900 to 1920. The earlier group, filling a period where other letters are scarce and bridging the passage from seafaring to authorship, are of considerable importance. Much in them is merely personal chat, much is of value only in telling where Conrad was and what he was doing, but every now and then Conrad opens his mind for a glimpse of his thoughts and his credos. Life was even then "abominably sad . . . A little illusion, many dreams, a rare flash of happiness; then disillusion, a little anger and much pain, and then the end— peace! That is the program, and we have to see this tragic comedy through . . . I view everything with such discouragement—everything darkly. My nerves are completely disordered." Conrad liked to indulge his pessimism, which can easily be taken too seriously, but he was able, at times, to see himself in perspective. "We are ordinary people," he admits, "who have just the happiness that we deserve; no more, no less." There are a few passages which should be marked and stored by everyone who cares to search for the man Conrad in the novels; particularly a paragraph in Letter 30, attacking the doctrine of expiation through suffering: "Each act of life is final and inevitably produces its consequences in spite of all the weeping and gnashing of teeth and the sorrow of weak souls who suffer as fright grips them when confronted with the results of their own actions. As for myself, I shall never need to be consoled for any act of my life, and this because I am strong enough to judge my conscience rather than be its slave, as the orthodox would like to persuade us to be."

The letters are given in English translation, with few examples of the original French, and are admirably edited. Both books are of much value in establishing the true literary personality of Conrad, a personality as wholeheartedly devoted to the faith that literature is art, as any that have created in English.

Harold N. Hillebrand

GEORGE SANTAYANA: *The Realm of Spirit.* Charles Scribner's Sons.

With *The Realm of Spirit* Mr. Santayana not only concludes *The Realms of Being,* which he began with *Scepticism and Animal Faith,* but puts a period to his philosophical work—a period as well turned as any of his single sentences. The young poet who wrote

> O martyred Spirit of this helpless Whole,
> Who dost by pain for tyranny atone,
> . . .
> Fill full my cup.

has gone full circle and returned home to bask in the realm of spirit. This realm affords the sanctum he has always sought, indeed a sanctum from which, even in his more narrowly humanistic works, he has never been far removed. To remark this long devotion to the spirit is not to imply that Santayana has never been a true naturalist. The Montaignian humanism of *The Life of Reason* had in it ample room for realms other than that of matter. Nor are those critics right who believe that Santayana's system, as set forth in *The Realms of Being,* is a distinct change from his earlier view. As he himself says, only the accent has changed. He has surveyed life, as a man must, from the point of view of one caught in its whirl. For the most part he has taken joy in that whirl, and he has tried not to be made dizzy by it. And if his joy has come far more from observing and comprehending it, and partly from dismissing it, than from an active endeavor to deflect its winds in this or that direction, or from pure animality, then the reason is, I suspect, that he is just the kind of animal whose being responds most to the joys of the intellect. The ideal philosopher, we may observe, would combine the spontaneous joy of animal living (instinctively and pleasurably adjusting himself to nature) with a high talent for and a deep joy in logical exactitude, poetic imagination, and sympathetic understanding. Something of the kind may well be Santayana's ideal. But he is too realistic to be disappointed when life fails to accord entirely with his dream. He knows well that life is not simpler but more complex than any description of it. He has—to use his own figure—cleaned well the windows of his soul. His works are the panes. And through his latest book he lets us peer into his heart and mind more directly than through any other. We do not get a complete view. No one book, nor all of them, could give us that. Nor do we get autobiographical details. We get his spiritual experiences generalized. Note, for example, that remarkable section on the relation of love to spirit. It is the distillate of much experience, as that experience is felt and judged by spirit.

But what is spirit? I can convey but little of the rich significance with which Santayana endows the term; but it is that within a human animal by which he looks before and after. It is emotional awareness and intellectual vision. It is a "pure light dancing on the waves of mutation." Laughter and love and poetic imaginings stimulate it; pain and drudgery distract it. Yet it learns from all things, learns but does not condemn. Spirit cannot condemn all other realms of being, for "its own gift is to bridge and to transcend the flux of nature ideally, while sharing it existentially." Spirit yearns to be free of the compulsions of matter and time and space, yet it cannot be completely free of them without ceasing to exist. Therein lies its tragedy. But though its destiny be tragic, its function is deeply satisfying. It secures for us whatever we come to know of inner calm and steadfastness.

> In the animal psyche the passions follow one another and battle for supremacy, and the distracted spirit runs helter-skelter among them, impressed with the sophistical arguments each of them offers for itself; but if the psyche grows integrated and rational, its centre, which is the organ of spirit, becomes dominant, and all those eloquent passions begin to be compared and judged, and their probable issue to be foreknown and discounted. The waves will not be stilled, but they will now beat against a rock. And with inner security comes a great inner clearness.

Such inner security and clearness pervade and illuminate this treatment. *The Realm of Spirit,* in showing us the beating heart and the discriminating, unifying mind of the author, affords us a delightful and rewarding spiritual experience.

Dayne Kennedy

EDWA MOSER: *The Mexican Touch.* Duell, Sloan and Pearce.

This book—Edwa Moser's first—is an account of a year spent in Mexico by the author and her three children; further it is an appreciative delineation of the Mexican character and pattern of life as seen by an intelligent, sympathetic American. Disarmingly she assures us that she does not pretend to write as "an economist, an archeologist, a historian, nor a diplomat." (She might well have added, "natural scientist.") But perhaps she is better fitted for her task by not being a specialist. She possesses the energy and curiosity to seek interesting representatives of the people she tells of, a warm understanding that draws them out, and a narrative and dramatic gift that makes them come alive for the reader. Beginning uncertainly, her story increases its tempo as she grows more sure of herself; at its conclusion one feels that it has been sometimes penetrating, and in the main piquant and charming.

If there is a dominating theme, it is *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner.* Understanding —on both sides—seems to Mrs. Moser a necessity for an improved relationship between the American and Mexican peoples. To such understanding, her book will contribute its part.

John Schacht

HALLIE FLANAGAN: *Arena.* Duell, Sloan, and Pearce.

In four years our national government spent forty-four million dollars of WPA money on the Federal Theatre—perhaps one-fourth of one per cent of the total WPA appropriation for that time—enough money, as Burgess Meredith once pointed out, to build one battleship. The returns for this outlay, in terms of relief, were 10,000 persons employed (that meant 40,000 off the breadlines) for four years, and 2600 returned to private industry. In terms of theatre, it is impossible to state the value of the project, except as an incalculable good. The baldest way of putting it is this: 64,000 performances of 1200 plays for a coast-to-coast audience of 30,500,000.

In June, 1939, the Federal Theatre was suspended. Reasons: Martin Dies heard that Director Flanagan had visited Russia—was therefore a Communist; Joe Starnes suspected Kit Marlowe of being a Communist; a man named Walton testified that a Federal Theatre audience had booed a policeman, hence the whole Federal Theatre was communistic; Senator Reynolds thought *Up in Mabel's Room* was Communist propaganda; Martin Dies called off hearings because it was time for lunch; and so forth. Real reason: the witch hunters and the pennywise needed a scapegoat, and the Federal Theatre, being politically and financially insignificant, and being at the same time very much in the public eye, exactly suited. So they junked it. The money thus saved was thrown into the pork-barrel; it is not even building a battleship.

The accomplishment of the Federal Theatre—its seventy-seven new plays, its Shaw and O'Neill cycles, its dance dramas, its negro plays, its children's plays, its living newspapers, puppet plays, its circus and vaudeville—is a great chapter in American theatrical history. Hallie Flanagan tells it well—fully, honestly, dispassionately. If you will but read her record of Federal Theatre's production, and then, in the last chapter, her account of its wanton destruction, it will break your heart.

Charles H. Shattuck

RICHARD ALDINGTON: *Life for Life's Sake.* The Viking Press.

Life for Life's Sake tells us simply and directly what has happened to Richard Aldington from his childhood until he came to the United States two years ago. The title clearly indicates Aldington's point of view in writing his autobiography; and a merely external treatment of the people he has been associated with, the things he has loved, the European scenes of his travels, overshadows the few, chance passages of reflection or analysis.

The brief account of the author's youth will seem familiar to those who remember *Death of a Hero,* for it is plain that Aldington, in portraying the significant influences on young George's childhood and adolescence, was drawing in part on his own experiences. Of chief interest in the chronology of the author's life is the period just before and during the Great War. Here H. D. and Ezra Pound and the Imagist movement stand out plainly. The treatment of the genesis of the Imagist movement is factual and historical, because, as Aldington says, none of the English members of the group has heretofore told the story of the pioneering work in London between 1912 and 1917. It is worth noting too that to Aldington, as to so many who have written of the English writers of his times, the figure of D. H. Lawrence emerges most sharply and unforgettably.

It is apparent from the dedication of the book and from a few passages that seem literally forced into the context, that Aldington looks upon *Life for Life's Sake* as more than a mere volume of reminiscences. After speaking of the impact upon his consciousness of World War II, he says: "Whatever sort of world results from these convulsions will be different from what I have known, and, I suspect, far less pleasant for people like myself, who will doubtless be eliminated. But the mere fact of this sudden and artificial remoteness has enabled me to write of myself and that period of my life with a certain detachment, as if I were treating a historical theme."

But this detachment does not permit Aldington, even at the vantage point of 1940, to write of the European life and society of the twenties or thirties with any real power of generalization or analysis. In the course of a description of one of his Italian journeys we find comments like this: "And—happy fool—I never dreamed that the destructive brute in men would break loose again." And again: "On the squalid track to the station a haggard beggar whined incessantly: *'Cieco, signori, cieco'*—blind, gentlemen, blind—and so we were, but didn't know it." The only point of view Aldington may be said to hold is that from World War I to World War II literary artists like himself existed in a fool's paradise. Life, including their work and the pleasures still obtainable fom European culture and manners, was pursued for its own sake, and those who pursued it had no way of knowing that a new conflagration would sweep much of its charm away. The passages which support even this limited point of view are mere accretions, and their presence, in spite of Aldington's expressed intentions, scarcely modifies the straightforward and pleasant autobiogaphical interest of the book.

W. McNeil Lowry

POETS OF THE MONTH: *The Broken Span,* by W. C. Williams; *Some Poems and a Devotion of John Donne; The End of a Decade,* by Harry Brown. New Directions.

These small books are the first three published under a scheme of presenting each month, in inexpensive pamphlet form, some good poet, old or new. Each year the list is to include some translations, and a selection from a past poet (such as Donne). The pamphlets are very attractive in format and appearance. Getting them out is thoroughly commendable of the publisher; if I quarrel a little with some of the work so far included, I am very happy (as I feel that other readers should be happy) to have it available to quarrel with.

Williams' book contains five poems written between 1915 and 1930, fifteen recent poems, or sections, from the poem "Patterson" (which apparently is a work in progress with Williams),

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and five other recent poems. In at least the last two groups, the poetry is essentially of the sort with which readers are familiar from the last sections of the *Collected Poems.* The poetic knowledge to be gained from Williams' work is of a world vigorous, sharp, sometimes sensuously rich; but unarticulated by intellectual activity: chaotic. ("No ideas but in things": the ideas stay jailed inside, and the things go their own way.) Reading him is rewarding within definite limits. He is very free from poetic vices, but the sum of positive poetic virtues he has seems smaller than the sum of poetic vices he does not have.

The book of Donne contains fifteen poems from the *Songs and Sonets,* the "fatal interview" elegy, seven from the *Divine Poems* (six of them sonnets), and the devotion made famous recently by Hemingway's quotation from it. Whether or not every reader's favorites are presented, the selection is representative enough to be quite satisfactory. Nothing need be said about it here save that it is pleasant to have part of the work of Donne made more obtainable than it was before, especially at a time when, I am told, the war is telling somewhat on the supply.

Brown, though he has published widely in periodicals during the last several years, has not hitherto appeared in book form. His nineteen poems here show—the publisher's blurb puts it not much too strongly—"a highly developed sense of form, an ear for music, and a gift for language." They show fairly constantly, too, a kind of uncertainty and dubiety, an "end of something" mood appropriate enough to his title. Brown's images and concepts, data of reference, are numerous and well spread (perhaps at times there is a plethora of them): crows, deer, horses, swallows, orioles, oaks, elms, mountains, sea; blight upon the elm, the mole's destruction of gardens, crumblings of monuments, season's agony; Magi, Lear, Odysseus, Xerxes, Pandar, Cressida; Central Casting, Klieg lights, long shots, close shots, skyscraper, museum, cinema; wisdom of the wound, patience of perception; love, truth, justice, death, darkness, time—probably the phenomena of nature have the quantitative best of it. Several of the poems entirely, and others in part, are rather directly Audenesque. (It should be unnecessary to say that this statement is intended as description, not praise or condemnation.)

What one learns from Brown is at least comparatively rich and illuminating. I feel nevertheless that his poetry suffers from a disability supposed to be characteristic of romantic poetry, certainly characteristic of much of contemporary poetry: he is attracted to things, but cannot make a wholly satisfactory working arrangement between things and ideas. The ideas take first place, and the things get pushed around at times, used but not really honored. I have a fancy that I detect some awareness of this, and distress over it, in the following not very characteristic sentiment from "The Appeal": "May we conceive the honor of / Forests and rivers; / Find in sequoias the secrets of patience, / And in Nile and Missouri a massive order / That with the streams of Ocean mingles in / A noble fusion."

W. R. Moses

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